

AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
MANNERS AND CUSTOMS
OF
ITALY;
WITH
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
MISTAKES OF SOME TRAVELLERS,
WITH
REGARD TO THAT COUNTRY,
BY JOSEPH BARETTI.

V O L. II.

*Il y a des Erreurs qu'il faut réfuter sérieusement; des Absurdités
dont il faut rire; et des Faussetés qu'il faut repousser avec
force.* VOLTAIRE.

L O N D O N:

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ACCOUNT
OF THE
MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

OF
THE
T. A. L. V.
WITH
A
DESCRIPTION
OF SOME TRAVELLERS

WITH
REGARD TO THAT COUNTRY
BY JOHN HARRIS

VOL. II

THE SECOND PART OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE T. A. L. V. WITH A DESCRIPTION OF SOME TRAVELLERS WITH REGARD TO THAT COUNTRY BY JOHN HARRIS VOL. II

L O N D O N

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AN
ACCOUNT
OF
ITALY.

CHAP. XVIII.

Mr. Sharp has said, that *the Italians place all their young ladies in convents, and leave them there until they marry or take the veil*; and the same thing has been repeatedly asserted by several protestant travellers* long before Mr. Sharp thought of giving the world his itinerary letters.

But why do these folks take so much pains to circulate this falshood in their

* See the first note to the preceding chapter:

respective countries? Is it ignorance, or is it malice? I will suppose that they mean nothing else, but to make their young country-women in love with their several reformati^ons, which allow of no convents, and keep them as much as possible from taking the least turn towards popery. But if this is their design, they must suffer themselves to be put upon a level with our knavish or foolish friars, who tell us millions of lies of the heretics with the pious intention to make us adhere closer to our present mode of belief.

Whatever motive the protestant travel-writers may have for this disingenuity, I must take the liberty to tell those who believe them, that their assertions upon this head are false, and that that we have no such general custom: and indeed it would be impossible to have it, unless we were to build thousands of new convents throughout our land, as those we have at present are neither numerous nor
large

large enough to contain the hundredth part of our young ladies.

Of this impossibility one may presently be convinced, by casting an eye on the authentic *List of the inhabitants of Tuscany* given us by Mr. Sharp. It appears by that list, that the number of the nuns throughout that state amounts to little more than *nine thousand*, and that the number of unmarried women and girls amounts to more than *three hundred and ten thousand*.

Let us now suppose upon a very moderate calculation, that out of the three hundred and ten thousand, only *thirty-six thousand* are young girls who are able to pay for education. Upon this supposition our nunneries contain four pensioners for every nun, in consequence of Mr. Sharp's assertion. Thus, for instance, a nunnery inhabited by *one hundred nuns*, contains beside *four hundred young ladies* who are pensioners. But if Mr. Sharp had taken the trouble only to step to some of our nun-

B 2

neries,

neries, and asked after the numbers of their inhabitants, he would have found, that a nunnery which contains, for instance, one hundred nuns, far from containing four hundred young ladies, generally contains *not a single one*, and very seldom more than *six or seven*. This discovery, which was not difficult to make, would probably have kept him from setting upon paper so palpable an untruth.

By this account, corroborated by Mr. Sharp's list, it plainly appears, that instead of having full *thirty-six thousand* young ladies locked up in the nunneries of Tuscany, we have scarcely *six hundred*, which bear but a very small proportion to near *a million of people*: and it cannot be reasonably supposed that the rest of the Italians are upon a worse footing than the Tuscans in this particular. Yet the distance between truth and Mr. Sharp's assertion will prove still greater, when we consider that the institutions of several amongst our female religious orders forbid
the

the nuns to receive young ladies as pensioners and boarders.

See now, my good readers, what dependance you must have on the veracity of your travel-writers, though their accounts be constantly uniform, and constantly delivered in the most petulant strain of affirmation ! They see nothing ; examine nothing ; but copy one another in a most shameless manner.

If the number of our young ladies placed in nunneries has been most impudently exaggerated by those ingenuous gentlemen, the number of our nuns themselves has likewise been by them enlarged to such a degree, as to make every credulous reader shrink with horror. And yet Mr. Sharp's list proves with uncontestable evidence, that their proportion to the rest of the community is no more than *one to a hundred*.

But still this number of our nuns in proportion to the rest of our community will be exclaimed against as too large, by

those deep dealers in politics who swarm so much in this political island; and they will look down with a disdainful eye upon the Italian legislatures, which deprive us of so many women, who, if made lawful mothers, might contribute their share to the greater strength and happiness of the country.

But pray, my dear politicians, where is the country, whose women can all be made lawful mothers? Is it England? I am afraid not; since in England there are at least five or six maidens in a hundred, who grow old in the utter impossibility of providing themselves with husbands; which I am sure is not the case in Italy, where an old maiden in an object scarcely ever to be seen, thanks to our nunneries, which are the general receptacle of those amongst our girls, to whom fortune (permit me the use of this heathenish word) has denied either a portion, or a fine face, or both. Let any English traveller (who stays long enough in the country for opportunities

opportunities of information, and is inquisitive enough to obtain them) inquire into the original condition of our nuns, and inspect a few of their faces at the same time; and I warrant he will find, that the greatest part of them in their maiden state were very poor, and that very few of them would have had in the world such powers of attraction as to stand a fair chance for husbands.

Where then is the great harm of having them parcelled out into nunneries, and let them live there from the estates belonging to them, and from their manual labour? I grant, that some rich and handsome girls may sometimes be found within their walls. But in a world like ours, is it really possible to have every thing perfectly right? It is enough if, in the gross, institutions which are found agreeable to the prejudices of a people, are not very detrimental to their welfare.

I say that amongst our nobility and people of easy fortunes, we have but few

old maidens, and amongst our low people we have still fewer.

To prove the first part of my assertion cannot be in my power; therefore I give the reader full liberty to credit it or not. But for the second I refer him to Mr. Sharp's book, where it is said that the Italians scarcely ever will have unmarried servants; contrary to the general custom of England, where to be unmarried is an indispensable requisite in servants of either sex.

Besides the above exaggerations about our nuns and our girls locked up in nunneries, many protestant travel-writers have thought proper to affirm, that the Italians are so naturally cruel, as frequently to compel their unhappy daughters to take the veil. But when we consult Mr. Sharp's list, and compare the number of our nuns with that of our unmarried women and girls, the imposture will glaringly show itself. If this practice was common among us, how could the proportion

portion be only such as that of nine thousand to three hundred and ten thousand? However I allow that the case will sometimes happen, and that parents will force a poor daughter into a nunnery: but far from being generally so cruel, the Italian parents are so generally indulgent, that by far the greatest part of them are very sorry when their girls take it into their simple heads to turn nuns. Far from clapping them forcibly, or even cheerfully, into convents, they do every thing in their power to set their brains aright whenever they discover them thus inclined. They ridicule or scold them as soon as they declare any such intention; and if ridiculing and scolding will not do, they take time to comply with their desire. They dress them as genteely as they can, and carry them to opera's, balls, masquerades, public walks, and other such places where young men ogle, and bow, and whisper, and talk loud, and perform all other acts of gallantry. They are in fine permitted

permitted all sorts of decent diversions to reconcile them with the world. If nothing will do, and girls stand it out stubbornly, then parents must submit, and they are made nuns, as the influence of the moon, a disappointment in a first love, a desire of shifting the scene of life, and some other such latent causes, is then construed by holy people into an evident call from heaven. But still we must take notice that they are not made nuns as soon as they enter the convent. They must undergo a state of probation, which is called *il Noviziato*. This state in some convents continues a whole year, and in some others three years. Should the girls alter their mind within that time, they are presently sent back to their own homes. But if the nuns like the probationer, it is a hundred to one she escapes them not; for they will then wheedle and caress her at such a rate, as to make her steadily persist in her resolution.

Few

Few are the Italian parents who do not go through all the above formality before they give their consent in such cases. Yet, as I said, it will sometimes happen that a girl is compelled by designed ill usage at home to save herself in a nunnery. Instances of that kind are rare and striking. They excite indignation at the time, and serve as warnings afterwards. An adventure happened in my time at Milan, which as long as it is remembered will deter our few unnatural parents from treating their daughters in such a manner. The adventure was this.

The father and mother of a young lady took it into their fancy to make a nun of her, whether she would or not. With such an infernal scheme in their heads, it may easily be imagined, that they tried all arts of persuasion, and when these failed, that they had recourse to rougher means. The unfortunate creature was at last overpowered by ill-treatment, and submitted herself to fall a victim to their barbarity.

Being

Being sensible of the impossibility of changing their cruel resolution, she declared at last that she was ready to comply with it. She performed her *Noviziato*; and when the twelve-month was elapsed, went through the hated ceremony, made her vows on the outside of the gate, as is usual, and jumped with a seeming alacrity on the fatal side of the threshold. The company that had assisted at the unhallowed sacrifice was preparing to retire, and the dismal gate ready to be shut for ever upon her, when she turned to her parents, and begged on her knees to speak one word to them in private. The request could not be denied. They were shown into the parlatory, the poor lamb at the inside of the gate, and the two wolves at the outer. On her entering the room the unhappy wretch locked the door behind herself with a double turn: then changing at once her countenance, and appearing no more humble and smiling,

smiling, she began to expostulate with them in a resolute tone, reproaching them in the most forcible terms with their diabolical cruelty. From expostulation and reproach she proceeded to curses and execrations; and this with a tone of voice so loud and full of rage, that the nuns could hear her very plain from without. They hastened to knock at the door, and begged of her to pacify herself and open it. The father stood interdicted, and the mother trembled: both had lost their powers of speech. My hand shakes as I write the conclusion of this horrible tale. The desperate young lady, after having given vent to her just rage, tied hastily one of her garters to the outward bars of the grate, and strangled herself in a moment: nor could the dismal act be hindered by the piercing cries of the father and mother, their wretched daughter being dead before the door could be opened by the terrified nuns.

I leave

I leave the reader to imagine what peace and comfort the two black souls enjoyed after the adventure, which rendered them universally detested; and what a remedy this must have proved against such sort of barbarity in parents.

Having now given an idea of the number of our Italian nuns, and of the young ladies intrusted to their care for education, I must tell the reader, that he is likewise grossly misled by the travel-writers when they inform him, that our nunneries are all very amply endowed, and superfluously rich. This is far from being true: there are scarcely twenty nunneries throughout Italy possessed of greater funds than what are necessary to maintain them. On the contrary, the greatest part of them are so slenderly provided, that their poor inhabitants would fare but very indifferently, if they did not endeavour to better their hard condition by means of their manual labour. Some of them therefore work with their needles, some knit stockings, some make
 1 ribbands,

ribbands, garters, buttons, flowers, cakes, and other little things for sale. Of whatever they earn, one part is for the community and the other for themselves. The life they lead is certainly not luxurious, and nothing but an early habit could make it endurable. They all go to bed early at night, and rise betimes in the morning, as they are never allowed more than seven hours sleep. Some orders practise discipline or scourging, and some not. Those that practise it are the most numerous; and the business is done before they lay themselves to rest, in such a manner as to be heard by their sisters in the next cells. However the mother abbess excuses it whenever they request it of her.

As soon as the morning appears, and in winter long before, they get up and go to sing their prayers in the choir. Then to breakfast, which takes no time, as it consists but of a bit of bread and a glass of water. Their dinners are likewise very frugal.

frugal. A soup, a slice of bouilli, and a bit of cheese, with some fruit, is all they customarily have; and their suppers are still scantier. In Lent and the Advent they fare still worse, for they have but one meagre dish in the morning with a salad, and only bread and fruit in the evening. Poor things! They scarcely ever get a belly-full but when they receive a new nun, at Easter, at Christmas, and on the yearly return of the day which is dedicated to their patron-saint. They fast likewise on Fridays and Saturdays throughout the year, and sing and pray in the choir three or four hours every day at different times.

If they have any little pension from their families, as is generally the case, or if they are ingenious and laborious, they are enabled to procure themselves some chocolate and coffee; and they are all very ambitious to have some provision of these two things, that they may regale themselves and their visitors: nor can their relations

relations and friends make them a more acceptable present than chocolate and coffee ; and snuff likewise, for they are all very fond of it. Both in the morning and afternoon they are allowed some *hours of parlatory*, as they call it. There they receive their visitors, and sit chatting with them through the iron-grate. This grate is double and very narrow throughout Italy. At Venice only it is not so : nay, the partitions there are so very large, that one may conveniently shake hands with them. But the largeness of the Venetian grates has ruined the reputation of the Venetian nuns.

An English lady, when she reads this account, will be ready to think, that these unhappy creatures, closely confined, praying much, scourging often, working hard, and eating little, must all be very puny, very unhealthy, and quite out of humour with themselves and with the world. Yet they are subject to very few

maladies, and live in general very long lives. Then they are all to appearance gay and lively. Though their trade be chiefly devotion, not many of them are truly devout. They look upon their numerous pious exercises as a piece of business, and chaunt or recite their Latin prayers in the choir by habit, without any farther view than that of consuming the time which must unavoidably be employed in it. Then not a few of them are in love with young gentlemen or with young friars ; and when they are in love, they make it a point to be very faithful, and never coquet with other men. But few British ladies would care to be in love after the unsubstantial manner of our nuns, as their silly loves must absolutely end in nothing else but sweet words, kind glances, and warm billet-doux. This my female readers will say is very comical ; and so it is. Yet the number is not small of our Italians, who prefer being in love with a nun rather than with any secular lady :

lady : and I still cannot help laughing at myself for having once carried my Platonic notions so far, as to be of that way of thinking.

It has sometimes happened, that a young nun has been seduced from her nunnery, and her lover has found means to run away with her. But this happens very seldom, as their gates are well watched : besides that the attempt is dangerous, as a man would be imprisoned for life, if not condemned to death, were he to be overtaken in the flight. Then the poor things are so accustomed to their own ways, and know so little of the world, that it is next to impossible to induce any of them to make her escape, even when they are most sincerely enamoured. They know, if they run away, that they must go to Geneva or to some other heretical country; and their ideas of heretics are most frightful. It is scarcely possible to make them believe that heretics have just such eyes and noses as we have, and that they are

like us to all intents and purposes. I have sometimes brought an heretic to visit some of them, and they did not scruple to give him a dish of chocolate, and prattle with him with tolerable freedom. But when he was gone they would generally tell me, that there was something very odd in the creature; and few nuns can be brought to think that it is possible for women to be in love with heretics. However they will certainly pray for any heretic they have once seen, and beg of God to make him a Christian. Most of the Venetian nuns know better; but in all other parts of Italy, especially in little towns, they are in general thus absurd.

Though they are not very devout, yet each has some favourite saint or angel, to whom she recommends herself, her lover, her friends, and her affairs, which, as I said, go little farther than making and selling some trifles.

Their love to their convents is astonishing. Many of them have assured me in the

most solemn terms, that they should be miserable every where else. Of this love a Venetian nun, not many years ago, has given an instance which I think pretty surprising. She was in love with a gentleman, and had found means in mask-time to get out of the convent at night by the connivance of the nun-portress. Once on her return home, some hours before day-break, she found the gate shut, contrary to agreement with her friend. What to do in so sad a situation? The lover proposed an escape, which could easily have been effected, as Venice has no gates, and he a man of fortune. He saw no other means to save her and himself. But the courageous damsel could not be prevailed upon to do this. She bid him get instantly away, and leave her to herself. Then she directed the gondoliers to the patriarch's palace, and insisted to speak with him immediately upon an affair of great importance. The patriarch ordered her up to his bed-side, heard her case, was

intreated to save her, and suggested what was to be done. The patriarch got up in a moment; ordered some of his priests to be called instantly; crowded with her and them in her gondola; and went straight to the convent. There the mother-abbess was called to the gate. The patriarch told her he had just heard, that she minded her office so little as to permit some of the nuns to go out of the convent at night: that he was informed of one actually out; and to assure himself of the fact, was come to visit the cells himself; insisting at the same time on her retiring instantly to her own apartment, as he did not want her company in his short visit. He then went up-stairs, followed by his priests and by the nun habited like one of them. As she got by her cell, she slyly dropt in, and probably was undressed and a-bed in a moment. When she was safe, the patriarch went back to the abbess, asked pardon for the trouble and the ill-grounded suspicion, and took his leave. A great presence
of

mind in the nun, and a laudable instance of prudence in the patriarch !

The generosity and compassion of our nuns are very great ; and they will stint themselves as much as they can in order to relieve the necessitous. They adhere to one another very closely, and never betray one another's secrets to the mother-abbess, the confessor, or any body else. Nay, their fidelity goes so far when entrusted with a secret, that even rivalry and jealousy cannot induce them to violate it. Their attachment to their beauty does not forsake them on their forsaking the world ; and they are most scrupulously studious in the adjusting of their veils and dresses. Those who pretend to know them thoroughly, affirm, that they fall often in love with one another ; and happy she who gets a female adorer. The loving nun will then make her bed, sweep her cell, and adorn it with flowers : she will wash her small linen ; help her in her

work ; furnish her with coffee, chocolate, and snuff if she can : she will even carve her beloved name in all the trees of the garden, and do any other thing in her power to get her heart. She will in fine push her complaisance so far, as to assist her in the composing of her letters to a male rival, and stifle her jealousy, let it be ever so great and violent.

Such is the general character of those amongst our nuns, whose institutions do not debar them intirely from the conversation of men. Yet I must not omit to say, that amongst them there are some who avoid all these vanities and fooleries ; some who employ much time in reading devotional books ; some who attend solely to their works and the duties of their condition ; and some who pant incessantly after their eternal salvation,

AFTER the nuns it will possibly not be unacceptable to speak of the friars : a strange set of mortals, whose mode of life, as well as that of the nuns, differs so much from the common modes of other orders of Christian people, that they have already afforded sufficient employment to a great number of writers : yet the subject, far from being exhausted, will probably furnish matter for many more, if things do but continue as they are for a few centuries longer.

And what have we been told by the greatest part of those who spoke of our friars ? That they are a numerous gang of dissolute and fanatical men : that their convents are so many places dedicated to ignorance and idleness ; and their churches so many monuments of pride and superstition.

Such has been the uniform cry against our friars, ever since the great schism, which

which a few centuries ago split one universal church into many churches; protestants of all countries and denominations have endeavoured to make those of their respective communions believe, that this body of men is not only useless but obnoxious to the commonwealth; and have repeatedly given it as their opinion, that it would be very good policy totally to abolish them for the advantage of religion and the good of mankind. But who will blindly subscribe to the sentiments of those, who are avowedly prejudiced by difference of tenets, and as much to be suspected of fanaticism as the fanatics they accuse.

This matter ought to be considered in the spirit of philosophy and politics, and not in the bigotry either of affection or hatred. As in my late long ramble through Italy I have taken some pains to examine our friars, and have had both the will and the means of so doing, more than the generality of protestants, I must own that
their

their outrageous invectives against them, have at present little effect upon me, and that their want of moderation upon this point, as well as upon many others, cannot be approved by men of sober thinking. It may be true in the main, that our friars are proportionably as viciously inclined, as any other body of men of equal number, as they cannot be exempted from the common weaknesses of mankind. But to abuse and vilify them indiscriminately, is certainly an act of the greatest injustice, as their body certainly abounds, and perhaps more than any other, in good and valuable individuals, and such as have on many occasions done eminent service to their country.

Many, a great many (I must say it again) are the falsehoods asserted as truths by itinerant writers with regard to the Italians; and amongst these, their surmises as to the numbers of our friars, cannot be left unnoticed. Miffon, amongst others, after having said, that "*the poor Italian*
"*ladies*

“ ladies are kept in perpetual confinement,” and wanting to give a reason for this Mahometan custom of ours, adds with great scurrility, that this is “ a necessary piece of caution in Italy, where THREE QUARTERS of the men, living under the insupportable restraint of a forced celibacy, would make a dreadful havock on their neighbour’s property, if some means were not used to prevent such disorders ;” that is, if the Italian ladies were not kept in perpetual confinement.

But to form some judgment on the sense and credibility of this account of monsieur Misson, we must observe, that of the fourteen millions which Italy contains, (one half of which are to be supposed females) the number of our friars must be little less than *two millions*, and of our secular clergy near *three millions and a half*, as our secular clergy is computed to be about one third more numerous than the regular.

None

None indeed of the itinerant writers ever took so high a flight as Misson. They have been contented only to say, that our friars are *very numerous, prodigiously numerous, or numerous beyond credibility*. But as these and other like expressions have no determinate meaning, my reader will be directly put in a condition to ascertain their number, if he will but cast his eye upon Mr. Sharp's LIST of the inhabitants of Tuscany*.

* As in the course of this work I have had occasion several times to have recourse to that list, it will be better to copy it here out of Mr. Sharp's book. It is really almost the only thing worth notice in it.

Married men,	- - - - -	142,699
— women,	- - - - -	143,590
Unmarried men,	- - - - -	180,348
— women,	- - - - -	190,874
Boys,	- - - - -	128,199
Girls,	- - - - -	119,986
Churchmen,	- - - - -	3,529
Priests,	- - - - -	8,355
Monks,	- - - - -	5,548
Hermits,	- - - - -	144
Nuns,	- - - - -	9,349
Protestant men,	- - - - -	230
— women,	- - - - -	55
Jews, men,	- - - - -	4,464
— women,	- - - - -	4,513

941,883

By

By that list it appears, that the proportion of our friars to the rest of the Italians, is scarcely that of *six thousand to a million*. So that, supposing the Italians to be about *fourteen millions*, it follows that the number of our friars amounts to about *eighty-four thousand*, and not to the *three quarters* of our men, according to the dream of that absurd and prattling Frenchman.

These eighty-four thousand friars are divided into about twenty orders, some more and some less numerous when considered with regard to each other. Each of these orders, as every body knows, is principally distinguished from the rest by the cut and colour of their habits, which are all of different make.

Each order has a peculiar manner of living; yet, even when narrowly inspected, the difference is not very discernable, as all their institutions agree in this main point, that they are all to live an exemplary life, and be models of sobriety, chastity,

chastity, and humility, according to the rules of their original institution, from which it is impossible they should all and equally deviate. Therefore, instead of entering into a minute detail of their orders, which would take up too much time, I will here singly divide them into two classes.

Those orders that have no funds of their own to live upon, go amongst us by the general name of *mendicant friars*: and as I have no general name for those who have such funds, I must here term them the *non-mendicant*. To distinguish them by the appellations of *rich* and *poor* would be improper, as the mendicant, though wholly dependant upon charity, are not poor in reality; and the non-mendicant are far from being all rich. Even amongst the Benedictines and the Jesuits, there are few convents in Italy possessed of more than what is barely necessary for the maintenance of their inhabitants.

I could

I could never have sufficient information exactly to determine the proportion between these two classes. The common opinion is, that the non-mendicant are to the mendicant *as one to four*.

There are two methods, by which the mendicant friars raise those voluntary contributions, without which they could not subsist. One is by saying numerous masses, for which, under the specious title of alms, they are paid about sixpence each throughout Italy: the other is, by sending their lay-brothers every day begging about the street of their towns, and to the houses in the neighbouring country. A lay-brother is a kind of inferiour friar, who is tied by the vows of chastity, poverty; and obedience, as well as the fathers, as they call them; but never receives the order of priesthood, and is a kind of servant to the convent. A lay-brother is easily distinguishable from a father by his head, which is shaved all over; whereas a father's has a crown of hair

hair left by the barber round the higher part, as my readers may have observed in pictures.

It is probable that both these methods of subsistence would prove very pernicious, were the number of our mendicant friars so very large, or did they live so luxuriously, as many disingenuous writers have endeavoured to make the world believe. But as their fare is very scanty, and their numbers bear little proportion to the inhabitants of the places where they are established, both these means prove quite effectual with regard to their eating and drinking. And the public charity has invariably been so good a fund to them ever since they were instituted, that they never yet were in danger of perishing for want of the few things that are necessary to man. Their lodging costs them nothing; and the dress of each individual (which will last many years) is scarcely worth fifteen shillings, being made of a very

coarse woollen stuff. They wear neither linen nor stockings, and have wooden sandals instead of shoes.

However, though they are seldom or never absolutely distressed for eating, drinking, cloaths, and lodging, yet they live in general a very hard and uncomfortable life. They must rise every day very early to sing mattins in the choir *, say their masses, and hear people's confessions.

This last business many of my readers will be apt to think a very agreeable occupation to the friars, as it must, in a good measure satisfy that natural and insatiable curiosity which all men have of knowing each other's secrets. Yet I never

* *Choir* in Italy we call that large empty space behind the great altar of a church, where priests, friars, and nuns assemble in circuit to sing. In churches served by priests or friars, that space has a communication with the church: but in the churches belonging to nuns, it is separated by a partition-wall, that hinders people from seeing them when they are on that duty.

could

could find any confessor pleased with his task. Some of them, whose veracity I have no reason to doubt, have assured me, that this business is extremely tedious, because the largest number of their penitents are intirely unknown to them ; because they do almost nothing else but repeat the same stories over and over ; because they cannot see their faces ; and because those who commit singular and curious sins seldom go to tell them, and only the vulgar tease them for whole hours with their petty scruples, simple fooleries, and ridiculous vices. If all people undistinctly were to tell them their doings honestly and without disguise, which few men will do under any sanction, the confessors might seem to have means of knowing the world better than any other set of men : but this is far from being the case, the greatest part of them being remarkably ignorant on this head : and I have often had occasion to observe, that our confessors, both friars

and priests, have not only a great affection, but an unbounded veneration for women, and appear not to value men much: and though that veneration may be attributed to the sex's superior goodness, of which they are informed by means of confession, yet many of our wags suspect, that the confessors never can read the hearts of females, and that they are more insincere in their confessions than the men. Be this as it will, it is certainly observable in all countries, that the best and simplest people are those that reverence women most.

When the fatiguing task of the morning is over, the friars go to dinner, (constantly at twelve o'clock) which is always very scanty, as I said, even in those days in which the lay-brothers have been most successful in their search. While they dine they do not speak; but listen to one of their brethren who reads some book as long as dinner lasts. After dinner a full hour is allowed for recreation, which consists

consists of walking about their garden in summer, (for each convent has a garden) or sitting by a common fire-side in winter, chatting or disputing with each other : after which they go to sing again for another hour ; and when this is over, those who chuse to go out, kneel before one of their superiours, kiss the hem of his garment, and beg permission for so doing, which is seldom denied. Those who chuse to stay at home, generally retire to their cells to read, write, or do some manual work. At sun-set they must always be within doors to sing prayers before supper ; after which they all withdraw, and go immediately to bed if they chuse, or look over their books for an hour or two ; and this is almost the only time they can freely bestow on the acquisition of learning.

As their meals are not plentiful, so their beds are none of the softest ; but consist of a mattress stuffed with straw or leaves of turkey-corn, with a coarse coverlet of

cloth, and no sheets. There they throw themselves down with their under-garment on. About midnight they are awakened with the rattle of a very noisy instrument shaken about the convent by a lay-brother, and called again to prayers for another hour ; after which they return to their beds till day-break.

This interruption in their sleep many of them have assured me to be their greatest hardship, and that no length of time ever can reconcile them to it, as it does to all their other duties. And indeed one would be ready to think it not only hard, but tending likewise to impair their constitution. Yet their unaltered temperance and uniform manner of living, screen them from many of the disorders incident to such as live in ease and plenty ; and very few of them appear sickly or puny ; but all look florid, robust, and not discontented ; which by their enemies is constantly attributed to their plentiful diet, and lazy way of living.

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From this picture of their general and constant mode of domestic life, it may easily be conjectured, that there is truth in what the mendicant friars say, that their maintenance never amounts to sixpence a day for each individual: and as a good part of what is given is afforded in kind to their lay-brothers in their begging expeditions, and what is hard money must necessarily return to the public, and still circulate, I do not see for what reason they should be considered by protestant politicians as so great a burthen to society, especially in a country which is without contradiction one of the most fertile and naturally rich in the whole world. The king of Prussia maintains a much greater number of soldiers than we do of monks, and in a country too, which is much smaller and poorer; and there may be a great doubt whether soldiers contribute more to the particular advantage of a country, or to the interest of mankind at large, than our monks of Italy: yet, in

the eyes of some sort of travellers, that king is a wise and glorious monarch, principally for his maintaining a large number of troops, and we are an absurd and bigotted people for feeding some thousands of monks.

But I must here observe, once for all, that I do not mean to condemn the wisdom of this nation, or of others, who have abolished these institutions. When I wrote to my countrymen any thing concerning the English, I have never presumed to impeach them because they are without friars. I have not fallen into that impertinent custom of travellers, of censuring insolently every thing which is not conformable to what is observed at home. While I speak of the effects produced in Italy by the things that we have, I wish it were in my power to bring men to the custom of examining so far into what they see, as to believe it possible, that many things which may for their inconvenience have been abolished very properly

properly in one country, may yet have so much of usefulness in them, as to make it not altogether absurd to retain them in another.

The life led by the greatest part of the non-mendicants, is pretty much like that of the mendicants. They also have their frequent daily singing in the choir, their masses to say, the confessions to hear, and their slender dinners and suppers to eat. But as they wear linen, stockings, and shoes, have better beds, lie in sheets undressed, and have not their sleep interrupted, their condition is certainly comfortable when compared to that of the mendicants. The mendicants are for the most part the offspring of poor people, and almost all have a vulgar appearance and servile manners. To be a mendicant costs but little money; and with about thirty or forty pounds a man may make sure of a maintenance for life in a mendicant order. But the non-mendicants must be at the expence of two or three hundred

hundred to be received : therefore they are in general better born and educated, and get consequently an easy admission to the nobility and gentry ; which is not often the case with the mendicants, who are not much regarded by the polite and opulent, except they have great personal merit. But by way of compensation, they are more revered by the common people, and more welcome to their houses, because they behave more humbly, and lead a harder and more exemplary life.

I have already observed, that a considerable part of the mendicant's income consists in the masses they celebrate : yet the non-mendicants do not neglect this article neither, as it produces a pretty good sum in specie to their convents. If I remember well, the Jesuits are the only order that say their masses for nothing.

This business of mass-saying is uppermost in a friar's thoughts, and the excellence and virtue of the mass are a topic, on which their rhetoric is never exhausted. A
mass,

mass, say they, is a most indispensable refrigerative to the poor souls that are burning in purgatory, and a mighty scarecrow to fright away the devil. A good number of masses easily obtain the faithful a power of perseverance in righteousness, and sooner or later disentangle a poor sinner from his bad habits. It will avert evil of any kind, and be productive of temporal as well as spiritual happiness. Without masses individuals would be miserable, and the public overspread with calamity.

Notions like these, forcibly and incessantly inculcated into the minds of the people, have such an effect, that few are the Italians who have not some mass celebrated from time to time, and especially upon important occurrences. Nor would any of them ever dare to make his last will without bequeathing a sum, great or small, for this purpose. Should any body, especially the rich and easy, forget a legacy of so much importance to his own soul,

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the plurality would look upon him as an unbeliever and an heretic, and both the friars and the secular clergy would not be very forward to defend his memory against aspersions of this kind, as without masses neither friar nor priest could subsist long, and preserve their influence over people's mind, as was the case in protestant countries ever since they abolished the mass, which has rendered their clergy absolutely dependant on the political establishments ordered in their respective countries for their maintenance and welfare.

All mendicant friars, and the non-mendicant too, have got the trick of calling themselves poor: but this is mere cant and equivocation. No one is to be considered as poor, but when his poverty renders him contemptible and ridiculous, as real poverty infallibly does. The friars, in spite of their pretended poverty, live well after their own manner; a manner they have chosen voluntarily. They are respected by individuals, and have a competent

petent share of power and influence with the public. Each of them has a chance of becoming a bishop, a cardinal, and even a sovereign prince, and head of the Roman church. Why therefore should they call themselves poor? This, I allow, is monkish dissimulation.

By this account the reader will see, that the two hardest conditions of a friar's life, consists in his indispensable attendance at the choir and confessional, which proves tedious, and the interruption in his sleep, which is always grievous, as it is repugnant to nature. Nor has a friar a possibility of exempting himself from these obligations, but by his attaining to so much credit in his convent, as to deserve to be chosen superior, or be permitted to turn preacher. When a friar is so lucky as to obtain one or other of these honours, it is in his option to conform to these hard tasks: besides that, to be a superior entitles him to a dish more at dinner if he chuses it; and to be a preacher renders

renders him master of a small sum of money, which he may employ as he pleases.

We have sermons preached on every holiday in almost all our churches : but Lent is the high time for preaching, as it is then done every day, Saturdays excepted, generally from the hour of eleven to twelve in the morning, and every preacher paid for so doing. All our Lent-pulpits have a salary annexed to them, and it is in Lent that our friars display their best powers of oratory.

If a friar is so happy as to obtain the public esteem by his sacred eloquence, he looks upon himself as a made man ; for he will then be emuloufly invited by bodies of parishioners, corporations, and other people to their Lent-pulpits. Nor is the permission for his accepting those invitations ever denied, together with that of living in a private lodging, where there is no convent of his order nearly adjoining to the church in which he is to preach.

By

By these means many a friar rambles about from town to town, from village to village, and even from province to province once a year; and for about two months keeps out of his convent, which is always a pleasing thing to them all. However their preaching obliges them to take great pains, and proves pretty heavy as long as it lasts, because, after having composed their sermons, they must commit them to memory from the first word to the last, that they may be able to deliver them with perfect freedom and volubility. Should a preacher ever hesitate a moment unnecessarily, or lose the thread of his sermon, he would raise a laugh throughout the audience; nor is any of them ever allowed to read his sermon, as is the case in several protestant countries. It is true that we have our Romaines and our Whitfields, who are vain enough to preach extempore, and say what comes uppermost: but such preachers are scarcely the favourites of any but the lowest rabble, and

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are seldom invited to good pulpits. Therefore those travellers through Italy, who only describe such spiritual mountebanks, give us as false accounts, as if an Italian in England were to take the measure of the English pulpit-eloquence from what he hears at the Tabernacle or Moorfields. I am very ready to acknowledge that the English have produced the best body of sermons in the world for solidity and good sense ; and if any enter into competition with them, it is not the Italians, but the French. Yet we have preachers who are of a class very different from those described by Mr. Sharp and other such travellers, and our Segneri and our Granelli would not disgrace the pulpit of any church or any nation.

The salaries annexed to the Lent-pulpits are greater or less, according to the respective places. In large towns there are pulpits that afford a hundred pounds salary ; but of these there are very few throughout Italy. The pope himself gives

no

no more than this sum : and I have heard, that the best pulpit in Italy is that of the cathedral in Turin, because the king of Sardinia allows the Lent-preacher three thousand Piedmontese livres, which is near a hundred and fifty pounds, besides a dish from his own kitchen every day. One may easily imagine that, when a friar gets a pulpit of only fifty or sixty crowns, he is looked upon as a very respectable member of his community, and much revered by his fellow friars, as this is with them an incontestible proof of his superior abilities.

The several orders of our friars are in reality no great friends to each other, though they be so in all outward appearance. Some orders hold opposite opinions in some moral and theological points, which creates much animosity between them. The vain disputes between the Thomists and the Scotists, the Probabilists and the Probabiliorists, have long divided our friars into nearly equal parties ; and

their long treatises for and against the grace efficient and the grace sufficient, with their numerous quarto's and folio's stuffed with idle conjectures about the immaculate or non-immaculate conception of our blessed lady, have filled their libraries with loads of rubbish: nor will they have done wrangling upon trifles as long as they exist. Each party will have it, that their arguments are perfectly conclusive: but a Jesuit never yet was convinced by a Dominican, nor a Franciscan ever subdued by a Carmelite. Individuals stick fast to the opinions received by their respective orders, nor does any ever desert his standard. In disquisitions of this nature too many friars fool away great part of their time and abilities: but still let us grant, that such a vain employment of their abilities and time exempts them often in a good measure from a worse; and if it is not very useful, it is at least innocent.

I never

I never had any great leisure to examine the polemical works of our friars, as my studies have leaned another way. But I have strong reasons to suspect them all of great dissingenuity in their disputations, as I know for certain that few or none of them ever play fair in their controversies with the secular learned. It has shocked me more than once to read their writings of this kind; and I shall in particular never forget one father Branda, a Barnabite of Milan, and father Buonafede, a Celestine of Comacchio, and the impudence with which they both have lately managed their controversies on mere belles-lettres against two Italian gentlemen, interpreting wrong, quoting false, telling lies of every kind, and attacking the moral character of their antagonists without sufficient provocation, in order to make their cause good, though most evidently bad.

This dissingenuity in our friars, no less injudicious than detestable, has lost them

in a great measure the good-will and favour of our learned, as it has long done that of the protestant, who nevertheless have, like them, been often guilty of the same crime themselves.

One of the oddest points of our friars' ambition, is that of having abundance of saints of their respective orders. Those that have already a good many, despise those that have few, and are mightily envied by them. Nor is it easy to conceive what efforts they all make at Rome and in every other place to encrease the number of their saints by canonization. When this happens, and a new saint is procured, there are as great rejoicings throughout their whole order, as if each friar had been himself legally declared a saint. Had they artillery on such occasions, they would make it roar much louder than princes do when their armies obtain a signal victory. For want of cannon, they have their bells rung at a most horrible rate for full eight days, to the

the no small disturbance of their neighbourhood.

It is their strong affection to their respective orders, that makes all our friars ardently pant after such whimsical honours: and it is surprising to consider the strange things they will assert both in their discourse and in print of their beloved saints. Our Saviour is scarcely a greater saint than St. Francis: St. Dominick has received letters from heaven wrote by the Holy Trinity; and I do not remember who it was that was married when still alive to the Virgin Mary. These fooleries have been termed *blasphemies* by protestant writers; and I have no great objection to the term. But, as we know better than the generality of protestants what melancholy effects a recluse life will produce, we only call them "*frenesie fratesche,*" *monastic madness*. Let us only take notice, that many of these strange subjects do prodigiously well in painting, and that many of our most excellent artists have

done wonders, when assisted by friarly
mithology.

One cannot help being surprised like-
wise at the pains they take, and the trouble
they will undergo, to augment the credit
and extend the influence of their orders.
In their missions, as they call them, which
generally last a whole week, they mount
scaffolds erected on purpose in the midst
of squares and other open places. There
after some long and pathetic exhortation
to the people who assemble in crouds
around them, they beat themselves with
ropes, and sometimes with iron chains, in
a most shocking manner, till they draw
blood from their naked backs, groan,
howl, and denounce hell-fire to hardened
sinners in as frightful a tone as their voices
will permit, to the great compunction and
satisfaction of the rabble, whose tears
always run plentifully on such occasions.

I remember the time when these mis-
sions were very frequent. However they
have of late not been so common, and are
even

even prohibited in some places, as some of our governments have begun to observe, that they render weak people mad with devotion : an observation which ought to have been made long ago. Yet, where they are still customary, the Jesuits and the several Franciscan orders signalize their zeal for the salvation of sinners in this sort of spiritual tragi-comedy. The other orders however disdain this method of getting a reputation for sanctity, and I never heard that they dealt in missions ; which yet never prove quite unprofitable to convents, because a collection is often made when the spirit of the spectators are raised to the highest pitch of enthusiasm by the missionaries' blood trickling down from their backs on the scaffold. It is true that the Franciscans were forbidden by their institutors *to touch money* : and I suppose that St. Francis, whom history *

* See a book intituled *Memoire istoriche di più uomini illustri della Toscana*, printed at Leghorn in 1757, and

describes as a very simple man, and truly pious, really meant to forbid them the use of riches in the strongest sense of the phrase. Yet his sordid followers take his command literally, and never touch any coin, not even with the tip of a finger: but a friar, who can get any money, has always some male or female devotee, who touches it for him, and keeps it for his use. Their money they chiefly lay out in handkerchiefs, night-caps, snuff, coffee, chocolate, and books; or in rosaries, prints, and medals, on which Madona's or saints are represented, to distribute amongst those who call themselves their penitents; that is, those who chuse them for their confessors and directors of their consciences. Besides this, when they are

read that part of it intituled *Vita di Fra Elia da Cortona, primo generale dell' ordine di San Francesco*. There is in it a very pleasing delineation of St. Francis' personal character, and a most amusing account of the steps he took to bring about the foundation of his order.

to transport themselves from place to place, they must pay for their voitures if they do not chuse to walk, and for their eating and lodging on the road, if they meet with inn-keepers so furly as to expect payment; which however is not often the case, especially with the Franciscans, and the Capuchines in particular, whose venerable beards and most humble deportment endear them to the vulgar much more than any other order.

Though, as I said before, the studies of our friars be not in general of any great service to the learned, as they chiefly consist of subtle disquisitions and useless casuistry, yet still new-modelled systems of theology and morality are published by some of them almost every year. These books are seldom read by any but themselves, and many of our learned scarcely know of their existence, Yet, as they are greedily bought and read by friars of all orders, our printers generally give their authors some little sum for the manuscript. Many
of

of them also compose lives of saints, collections of miracles, petty books of devotion, and other things of this kind, which the little vulgar can buy for a few pence; and many a friar, by these means, encreases his little stock of money, and is thus enabled to buy a better night-cap or a better handkerchief.

Of their churches they take the utmost care, that people may come to them with a good heart. They sweep them very clean many times a day when it is necessary, and some part of their revenue, howsoever procured, is bestowed in embellishing and adorning them with pictures, statues, carving, gilding, tapestry, flowers, and all sorts of sightly baubles; and often by means of the most excellent music that the country can afford, both vocal and instrumental, render them the most agreeable places for the people to assemble in. They illuminate them even in day-time with a considerable number of
tapers

tapers and torches, especially on holidays; which, together with the processions, occasions a considerable consumption of wax, and consequently no small export of money out of all parts of Italy into Muscovy and other countries. Yet our governments wink at this disorder, as well as at some other little evils arising from their practices; and many a politician have I heard say, that something must be sacrificed to gratify the populace, and hinder them from raising in tumult, as they would probably do, were they not kept in perpetual good-humour by processions, church-illuminations, and those other things, wittily termed rareeshows by the witty Mr. Sharp.

It is this consideration, I suppose, which makes our government overlook also the inconvenience arising to the state from the celibacy of the friars, which may possibly deprive the community of many families. But, since it is impossible to bring the
bulk

bulk of mankind to any great degree of reasonableness, I do not see that our governments are so impolitical as they are thought by strangers, when they wink at something that is bad, to avert what might probably be worse.

I will not affirm it, because such things do not easily admit of positive proof one way or other; but I think it probable, that to the increase and influence of the friars, especially the mendicants, we owe in a good measure the domestic and profound peace we have long enjoyed all over Italy, which is never disturbed by commotions and popular seditions: and to them we may possibly be likewise obliged for the utter extinction of those enraged parties and family-animosities which distracted all Italy for several centuries, and filled it with innumerable murders and calamities. The friars cannot get any thing by civil feuds and dissensions; therefore they make it a principal point to preach

preach and recommend peace and love continually, and thus they tend at least in some degree to keep us peaceable amongst ourselves.

The friars have been often stigmatized by ultramontane writers as very loose and debauched: but the accusation is surely ill-grounded and calumnious. Were their inclinations ever so bad, it would even be impossible for them to be publicly and grossly vicious. In large cities some of them may play the libertine, and break one of their strictest vows without any great danger, as in large cities almost every body may hide himself in the croud. In Venice the convenience of masquerade may be, for aught I know, a good cover to the immorality of some friars, as there they are all permitted to wear masks as well as the rest of the people. Yet in Venice, as well as in other places, they must behave with the greatest circumspection when they have a mind to be vicious, as otherwise they would not only be severely reprimanded,

manded, but rigorously punished, if they were to be noted for a loose conduct, or gave the least room for scandal or complaint. When they are guilty of gross imprudence in point of morals, they are instantly sent out of the way by their superiours : and when we go to enquire after them at their convents, the common answer is, that they are just set out on a mission to the holy land ; which answer is always interpreted, that they have been clapped up in perpetual confinement, or put secretly to death. No religious order will endure to be dishonoured by the publicity of a scandalous adventure ; and the friar who has had one, is seldom or never after seen in the world : so that, it may be concluded, if they are loose and dissolute, that no ultramontane writer has any easy means of knowing it, and that the works of itinerant pretended observers contain nothing else but mere defamation when they tax our friars of dissoluteness.

Add

Add to this, that almost no order allows a friar the liberty of going abroad by himself. Each has always a companion assigned him by the superiour whenever he asks leave to go out, and thus they are a check upon each other.

Next to the accusation of debauchery our friars are charged with laziness : but this is likewise a false charge. The greatest part of them are continually and painfully employed either in or out of the convent. At home they must mind the choir, the confessional, and the church. They attend their own sick and impotent. They clean their own cells, and employ besides many hours in study and in reading lectures to the young friars, who for several years are kept under the strictest discipline, scarcely allowed to speak among themselves, much less to strangers. No sort of gaming is permitted them, but draughts and chess, and these only in the hours of recreation. And what do friars do when they go out in couples as usual ? They go to visit the
1
sick

sick and assist the dying whenever they are called, for this is one of the principal points of their institution. They walk up and down the streets, seldom calling on their own families, or the few friends they had before their forsaking the world; or they go to see the functions of other friars, that they may give an account of them to their companions on their return. Many of them by way of relaxation from their unavoidable employments draw devotional pictures, carve crucifixes, make various toys, and delve and water their gardens. As they all take snuff, those who have no great means of buying it, apply carefully to the cultivation of tobacco, and make it themselves. The Capuchines and all other Franciscans have many amongst them who are weavers that make their own cloth, and many who play the tailors and sew that cloth into garments for the use of the brotherhood. And I must not omit saying, that in the long catalogue of our most famed architects

sects and painters, some names of friars are to be found. Can people, whose actual profession exempts them from the last degree of manual labour, be justly called a lazy people?

In the pope's dominions some few of their superiours take sometimes the liberty of going to an opera or play: but simple friars seldom or never obtain this permission. At Naples they enjoy likewise some privilege of this kind: but in all other parts of Italy, especially throughout Lombardy and Piedmont, no friar is suffered by the people in any such place, and would be clamorously driven out as soon as perceived, as it happened once in my memory to two foreign friars; so that many of them have never seen in their whole life any kind of public diversion, except Punchinello in the streets. But when I say that friars do not resort to the stage, or other public place of diversion, the reader must always remember, that the customs of Venice are seldom to be included in

the general customs of Italy, as the laws and constitution of that city are notably different from those of the other Italian states. The friars therefore enjoy great freedom at Venice, which has given room for the proverbial saying, that "*Venezia è il paradiso de' frati e delle puttane,*" *Venice is the paradise of friars and whores.* However, let us not forget that in Venice the Jesuits and all the Franciscan orders never mask; but live as strictly and exemplarily as they do in other places, and scrupulously keep within doors even more in carnival than in any other time.

But the chief accusation brought against our friars is, that they are most shockingly ignorant: and I will allow, that the plurality are so in a great measure, especially the mendicants, and all those who are bound by their institutions to many hours of choir every day. This occupation fatigues them too much, and it is not surprising if it palls their appetite for knowledge. But why are they reproached with

not doing what they cannot do, and what they do not pretend to do? Am I to be ridiculed for not being a fiddler, when I am not allowed the free use of my fingers, and lay no claim to the honour of fiddling? Their institutor's aim was not to make them learned, but to make them holy. They were to go beyond the line of strict duty, and be living proofs to the people, that the approach to that line cannot be difficult. This, and not the cultivation of learning, was the first purpose of their institution: and we must consider, that if our friars were *all* addicted to study, they would in a great measure be disqualified for those mean but useful employments which they actually fill. A vast number of poets and philosophers would not easily submit to the drudgery of hearing the sins of sots, the complaints of the sick, and the groans of the dying: nor would it be very easy to make them sweep a church, or walk the streets in procession, and thus keep the populace in good humour, and

divert them from the many mischiefs, which inevitably arise from suffering the minds of the common people to prey too much upon themselves and to fall into a state of melancholy and discontent. These methods of keeping the multitude continually impressed with the sense of religion dressed out in a pleasing form, is found by the experience of all times to be a wonderful consolation to them under the miseries incident to their condition.

But further, as to the learning of our friars, (without going one step out of our way) do we not actually see what has been the success of a large body of men, all forced by their institution to study? Many of them, it is true, have been an honour to their society and their country: but the majority, thro' a desire perhaps of striking new roads across the vast regions of knowledge, have plunged unwarily into the whirlpools of error, and tumbled down the precipices of idle speculation. The Jesuits have puzzled themselves with
subtile

subtile disquisitions, disturbed the world with wild opinions and alarming tenets, and brought at last misfortune and disgrace upon their whole brotherhood. Had they been in general as ignorant as the Capuchins and Minims, and attended more to practical than speculative virtue, they had been as peaceful and as happy. Had they not been animated by that restless ambition which is almost inseparable from men of superiour parts and understanding, they had never been driven from their homes; never been tossed about the Ocean and Mediterranean; never brought themselves into the imminent danger of being utterly extirpated; and never seen many of their community perish with mere distress upon their landing on an inhospitable shore.

However, let us not take it intirely for granted, that our friars are quite so ignorant as their enemies pretend. The greatest part of them are tolerable Latinists, and not a small number deeply skilled in Greek and in the Oriental languages.

guages. A sufficient number likewise apply to casuistry and school-divinity, as I said. They study the Bible carefully, the Fathers, Aristotle, and his Commentators : nor are they totally unacquainted with canon-law and ecclesiastical history. Not a few of them are good antiquarians, and many very conversant in the belles-lettres. They all learn music enough not to sing dissonantly, and the most skilful musician we have at present is a friar *. And is all this to be called ignorance, perfect ignorance, shocking ignorance ?

I know very well, that the chief studies of our friars are in the present age very much out of fashion, especially amongst those who lay the greatest claim to politeness. I know that many of the modern heroes of literature look down with contempt on acquisitions like theirs, which yet have immortalized many names. But

* The learned father Martini at Bologna.

though

though the mode of life which our friars follow may render the possession of those requisites that constitute a modern wit almost impossible to them; yet in my opinion many of the most famed works of the present writers will certainly never make any man so wise and so good, as the reading the most despised amongst the Scholiasts, and the most neglected amongst the Fathers: and I cannot help thinking, that many of our friars ought to be looked upon with some degree of esteem, though perhaps not with that veneration, which is bestowed on your favourite Voltaires and your celebrated Rousseaus.

Of the general characteristics of our friars, many are laudable and many blamable. To their patience in misery, their adherence to due subordination, their attachment to their religion, and their ready services to the necessitous, none of their enemies has had generosity enough to do justice. The protestants in general have found the friars always ready to encounter

them in the field of controversy, and as able as themselves to wield the weapons of truth and falsehood. Disputers of all denominations soon grow hot, and protestants are as subject to irascibility as papists. They have therefore cried the friars down for near three centuries, and painted them as men quite devoid of all knowledge and of all goodness. But as they write at random, from prejudice and not from observation, not only all their good, but several of their bad qualities utterly escaped their sagacity. There is one of the bad, which has not been often mentioned: I mean their general want of affection to their parents and families, and their perfect apathy with regard to those friends they forsake when they forsake the world.

When a friar has resided a while in his convent, he entertains such an attachment to his order, that he loses all tenderness to those who are not hooded and habited like himself; forms no private friendship; has no regard for individuals; and cares
for

for nothing but what is conducive to the advantage of his new companions. His endeavours tend now to extort from his family and friends even what he knows will distress them if granted; nor does he ever cease to tease them on the least appearance of succeeding by importunity, even when his convent is far from being in any pressing necessity.

This hateful habit of thinking a friar never renounces, not even on his death-bed. If he dies possessed of any thing, it never happens that he leaves it, or part of it, to his parents or relations when they happen to be needy. Every tittle is bequeathed to his convent; and blood has no more effect upon him than on the stupid brute. Were I to give my vote for the abolition of our religious orders, this want in them of natural affection would be my only inducement. And yet I am sensible that some apology may be offered for them, even on this particular. I know
that

that friars enter their convents before their affection to their families be rivetted by habit and reason. They are taught no other duties but those of their new life, and incessantly recommended a total disregard of whatever they left behind them when they turned their backs upon the world. These solicitations, never discontinued, are nearly irresistible; and I do not wonder at the effect they produce. We are Christians, Jews, Mahometans, or idolaters from similar causes; and it is but seldom that we can help being what we were imperceptibly made by early and repeated exhortations. But, though I may excuse this offensive insensibility of our friars, and pardon it as involuntary, yet it is impossible to be reconciled with any mode of life, when it strongly tends to obliterate friendship and efface the very traces of that kindness, to which consanguinity has an indisputable plea.

However,

However, as there is no evil but what is productive of some good, it is chiefly to this apathic disposition of our friars, that many remote regions owe whatever light they have of the gospel. No corner of the earth is distant enough for their zeal; and whenever religion commands, every friar is ready at a minute's warning to set out for the arctic or the equinoxial continent. It is then that we see them all thoroughly inflamed with a desire of spreading those truths which they believe indispensable to salvation. Deaf to all domestic endearment, thousands of missionaries have patiently gone through the greatest hardships, and intrepidly encountered the most imminent dangers for the advancement of Christianity: nor are they few that have faced the cruellest death amongst infidels and idolaters with a fortitude and resignation quite unexampled amongst men. And if this is not virtue, what it is that deserves the name?

Let

Let me add one paragraph more on this fertile subject, and ask my reader whether these men are worth knowing? Yet these men, so good and so bad, so wise and so foolish, so great and so little, instead of being attentively examined, are only derided and abused. Though they and their peculiarities afford the most curious subject for speculation in human nature, yet not one in a hundred of the English travellers, when in Italy, or in other popish countries, ever shows the least desire of knowing the distinguishing marks of such an odd and surprising set of mortals. Mr. Sharp himself, a man of curiosity, after having resided for two months in a town where the friars are more numerous than in any other in Europe, has had nothing more to say of them but that they are superstitious and have fat guts. Alas, good Sir! you had done much better to mind nothing in Italy beyond your precious health, and you ought never to have mentioned

mentioned our friars if you had nothing
 else to say of them, but that that they
 have fat guts and are superstitious!

CHAP.

C H A P. XX.

TO the above sketch of the general character of our friars, I beg leave to add a few thoughts towards alleviating a little the heavy charge we lie under in all protestant countries, of being almost as great idolaters as the ancient Greek and Romans.

I have read with great pleasure Middleton's famous *Letter from Rome*, as well as many other English works of that kind, and am perfectly convinced that *the conformity* (in many external practices) *between popery and paganism is very great*: but what does that conformity prove? Nothing else, in my opinion, but that *the first preachers of Christianity in Italy* did not trouble themselves about many heathenish customs, which they either considered as indifferent in themselves, or
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as politically good : it proves that the eradication of ancient customs is so very difficult, that no change of religion can totally efface them, how long soever it may continue : And it proves, that men will imperceptibly add so many ornaments of their own to the primitive simplicity of any religion, as to render that simplicity scarcely discernable after a long revolution of centuries.

But there is no need of reading Middleton's letter, or any other such ingenious and learned performance, in order to be convinced, that men have always had, and always will have, a certain set of ideas about religion, seemingly different, yet still the same, and still moving in unvaried rotation ; for there is in all religions something that is right, let them be ever so erroneous.

I will allow, that the protestants in general, and the English in particular, have purified the language and simplified their notions of Christianity to a very great degree.

gree. But when they think or speak of religion, are they able to conceive ideas and find words and phrases intirely different from those of the ancient Heathens, when they thought or spoke about religion? Two of the most predominant ideas in all religions are undoubtedly those of *heaven* and *hell*: but when protestants think of *heaven*, are they able to keep their imaginations from running about a *celestial Eden*? This heathenish idea will be prevalent whatever they may do, as long as they shall be so charmed as they are with their gardens and fields, as the ancient Heathens were with theirs. And a protestant *hell* will likewise be something resembling a pagan *tartarus*, composed of everlasting fire, as long as men suffer exquisite pain by exposing a finger to the rage of that element. Men, I repeat it, have a set of ideas in common, that will for ever circulate, let their respective religions be ever so different. A
 protestant

protestant architect cannot build a St. Paul's or a St. Martin's upon any plan but those pagan ones of Mercury and Diana ; and a protestant poet cannot draw Satan and Moloch with any other pencils but those used by the Heathens in painting Pluto and Enceladus. A bishop must by all sorts of Christians be distinguished from a common priest, either by a different dress, or by some other mark of superiority, just as a pontiff of old was distinguished by similar means from a flamen. And how can we express worship and thanksgiving in our churches, be they protestant or popish, but by solemn singing, by decent speaking, by reverential silence, by kneeling, bowing, or prostration, just as the Gentiles did in their temples when they intended thanksgiving and worship ? Nay, is it possible for protestants or papists to speak of the Almighty himself, without making use of the same heathenish substantives and adjectives used by the ancients when they spoke of their

Jupiter ? I will not drive this reasoning farther ; but simply say, that it is impossible to escape a parallel between any two religions, be they ever so different, when a man of wit and learning will set about it. Several of the ceremonies now used in Italy are as probably borrowed from the Jews as from the Heathens ; and many authors have censured the Jewish religion for its conformity with the Egyptian in many rites and ceremonies. It would not even be a very difficult task to find some conformity between the Hottentots and the Jews : for what do the Hottentots do when they cut off one of their genitals ? They only commit a mistake with regard to the proper place of circumcision : and several authors have found strong marks of conformity even between the Jews and the people of America in many of their religious rites. But religious rites signify very little to the substance of religion, though people, according to their several dispositions and habits, may find the practice

tice or omission of them more or less useful to stir up a sense of religion: and it were well if Mr. Sharp, and those other writers, who are so prodigious angry with every thing that they do not see practised at home, would imitate the moderation of the church of England, which in regulating this point for herself, has had too much sense rashly to condemn other churches. See the preface to her common prayer book, where it is said,

*“ And in these our doings we condemn no
 “ other nations, nor prescribe any thing but
 “ to our own people only, for we think it
 “ convenient that every country should use
 “ such ceremonies as they shall think best to
 “ the setting forth of God’s honour and
 “ glory, and to the reducing of their people
 “ to a more perfect and godly living without
 “ error and superstition.”* What practices are but proper and decent in you, and what are improper and superstitious in us, is a point which hot and rash men of either side are not very well qualified to determine.

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mine. We burn incense in our churches, and you do not: but where is the great mischief of perfuming a church with that sweet odour, especially in a country where a numerous meeting of people, all abundantly perspiring, would make the place disagreeable? We play upon fiddles and clarinets in our churches, and you play only upon the organ: but is there any greater sanctity in an organ than in a clarinet or a fiddle? and is the air more holily shaken by the vibration of one sound than of another? And how can some protestants be so unchristianly enthusiastic, as to make use of the hard word *abominable*, when, for instance, we sprinkle ourselves and others with a few drops of water mixed with salt? Where is the abomination of this and other such trifling customs? and what word would they use if, instead of sprinkling, we were all the while flinging stones at each other's heads? Our votive offerings are at bottom nothing else but tokens of our gratitude
to

to heaven for having delivered us from evil ; and I see nothing amiss in this practice, although it has been used by Heathens. And, if we have frequent processions on holidays, a procession has nothing sacrilegious in it, nor does it appear to be a superstition of a very noxious quality : and if we have them, and you not, it is because our climate, less constant than yours, enables us to keep our people as harmlessly occupied on those days, as the Roman heathens did theirs. There is nothing with which Mr. Sharp seems so much affected as with these religious ceremonies. They offend him, they shock him, they stir his indignation up to the highest pitch ; and he holds our *ridiculous gestures and whimsical tricks*, as well as our *proud priests* in the greatest detestation : and yet while he was in Italy, as he tells us, he could never keep away from our churches, though he fretted to see *young men walking in a right line, dressed in red banyans and white nightgowns* : but why

is he not shocked to see young men with bushy wigs, with black nightgowns, and white surplices over them, walking in a crooked line? Is it that the colour of red provokes him, as it does bulls and turkey-cocks? And why should our bowings and kneelings, sittings and risings, praying sometimes with a low and sometimes with a loud voice, inspire him with such an uncommon rage, more than the similar practices which are used in his own church? There are people in these kingdoms who blame with equal fury many of those religious ceremonies that are used by the church of England; and just with as much reason as Mr. Sharp does those used by the church of Rome.

But what signifies answering a multitude of such ridiculous accusations, always delivered in a most irreligious stile? There is no great need to give reasons for a thousand ceremonies, which though in themselves sometimes childish and insignificant, and even derived from heathenism,
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are yet in general either useful or harmless. All this, one way or other, is mere matter of fancy, and no way affecting the substance of religion, or the practice of virtue. And will any body say, that it is possible to render Christianity perfectly uniform every where? I think it is not, whatever enthusiasts may dream. Suppose, for instance, the Hernhutters were to succeed in their present scheme of converting the Greenlanders, and make them embrace the gospel; and when this work is effected, suppose the Greenlanders entirely cut off from all intercourse with Europe: would it not then be easy, especially for such deep critics as Mr. Sharp, to find as much fault with their scantiness of Christian practices, as with the superabundance of ours? And would not their Christian practices in such a case be very scanty? They certainly would, if we reflect that they could not even be able to find bread and wine for the eucharistic table. There is no need of enlarging upon this

hint, and of proving that it would be absolutely impossible for many nations to be Christians either after the English or the Italian manner.

But I hear Mr. Sharp repeat in a very grave tone, that this is not the great point in question between protestants and papists. The great point is, that the papists have full twenty measures of the heathenish religion with the twenty they have of Christianity; and that this is a shocking mixture. However, let me ask him what reason protestants have to boast so much of superior purity, when with their twenty measures of Christianity they have five of paganism likewise? What matters the more or the less when religion is in the case? They might as well boast, that their faces are less black than ours, because they washed them in ink fifteen times less than we. Our processions, votive offerings, burning of incense, lighting lamps and candles, using holy water, and other such practices, assist our devotion undoubtedly,

undoubtedly, as the playing upon an organ does that of an English congregation; nor could any prejudice arise from them either to body or soul, were they adopted by the whole world. They neither impair health, nor shorten life; and will neither shut the gates of heaven, nor open those of hell. And do they influence manners for the worse? Do they make us less good than the English, Dutch, Danes, or Swedes? This effect they have not, if we may credit those very men who are so earnest in crying them down. Middleton says, that “ *of all the places he has ever* “ *seen, or ever shall see, (mark the energy* “ *of his words) Rome is by far the most* “ *delightful, because travellers there find* “ *themselves accommodated with all the con-* “ *veniencies of life in an easy manner; be-* “ *cause of the general civility and respect* “ *shown to strangers, and because there* “ *every man of prudence is sure to find* “ *quiet and security.*” Bishop Burnet, another tremendous enemy to our superstitious

stitious practices, honesty confesses, that
 “ *after all the liberty he had taken in writ-*
 “ *ing his thoughts freely both of the church*
 “ *and see of Rome, and was known by all*
 “ *with whom he conversed there, (known*
 “ *to be no friend to our religion) yet met*
 “ *with the highest civilities possible amongst*
 “ *all sorts of people.*” Mission, the scur-
 rilous Mission, who had the impudence to
 affirm, that our “ *priests and friars are*
 “ *commonly horrible debauchees,*” and that
 “ *it is impossible to fancy any excess, of which*
 “ *they are not guilty,*” the despicable Mis-
 sion himself, in spite of his low malice
 to us, is compelled by truth to confess,
 that “ *the most bigotted Italians show no*
 “ *hatred or aversion to those they call here-*
 “ *tics, and their low people only say they are*
 “ *not Christians when they hear them ridi-*
 “ *cule their Madona's.*” It is needless to
 quote other protestants to prove, that our
 mode of religion has no tendency to make
 us worse than other people in point of
 morals and manners. I will only observe
 again,

again, that your brisk lords and wild squires, who ramble about our country, are admitted with pleasure to our diversions and our tables, are treated by us as companions and friends, and make even love to our ladies whenever they please, without the least hindrance from difference of religion: nay our learned friars themselves treat your divines with the greatest deference and affection whenever they see them in Italy: and who can prove that this our kindness, open-heartedness, and civility may not possibly be the result of our peculiar superstition? Our modes of religion force our eyes on beautiful mothers tenderly embracing their children, and on saints and angels melting with devotion; and thus contribute to render us affectionate and gentle. These modes accustom our voices to express melodious sounds; and thus assist in harmonizing our souls. These modes rejoice our minds with pleasing shows, and frequently dispel the clouds
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of sadness and ill-humour ; and thus the habit of being inwardly chearful makes us pleased with strangers as well as with ourselves. Such general advantages procured to us by our mode of religion, will escape the observation of the connoisseurs in Christianity, and their sagacity will never extend farther than the *striking conformity between popery and paganism*. But were they obliged to assign a cause for our infinite kindness to one another, and extreme urbanity to strangers of all nations and communities, they might possibly find that cause no where but in our superstitious modes of religion, perhaps better calculated than any other extant for the general advantage of humanity.

However, suppose us for a moment willing to comply with the desire of your Middletons and your Burnets, of your Missions and your Sharps, and ready to reform a good number of our superstitious practices and ceremonies, how could we do it without raising great disturbances
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in our land? how could we do it without incurring the danger of falling out among ourselves, as your forefathers did when through zeal or policy they undertook a reformation? Shall we burn down each other's houses, because a part of us has taken an aversion to the pictures and mosaics of St. Peter, and the gold and jewels of Loretto? Shall we cut each other's throats because not permitted to melt a virgin's image into candles to light us at quadrille? Shall we venture to see our provinces overrun with military desperado's, that people may be kept from foolishly recommending their eyes to St. Lucia, or their teeth to St. Apollonia? Shall we open doors and gates for Lefdiguieres and Bouillons, for Cromwells and Iretons, to rush forth, horribly clad in religion, and deprive numberless wives of husbands, and numberless children of fathers?

But suppose still, that all this fermentation caused by novelty is over, at the small expence of some millions of lives, and that
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we are at last full as reformed as you are: suppose we are laughing as well as you at St. Francis for his crossing the sea upon his cloak, and at St. Anthony for his preaching sermons to the fishes, what will be the consequence? Shall we really be the better for it? To convince us that we really shall, you must first convince us that the modern English, the modern Dutch, the modern protestants of all denominations, who believe these things no longer, are really better than their ancestors, who formerly believed them as well as we. Prove that if you can: prove that you are more tender-hearted, more hospitable, more magnanimous, better in fine in every respect than your forefathers of four hundred years ago: prove that your vices are as much diminished as your virtues are increased; and we will conquer our aversion and dread of reformation; run the hazard of any calamity in order to bring protestantism about; and be just as true and good Christians

Christians as you who rail so much at our present superstition. But as long as we see no other means of reforming, except those that your history affords, and as long as your country abounds with snarlers, debauchees, drunkards, thieves, and other such people full as much as ours, if not more, God forbid we should ever think of innovations in religion. Let a thousand Middletons and Burnets, Missions and Sharps, display for ever their wit and their erudition to our prejudice, and blame us for things we cannot help, except we throw our whole country into convulsions; still let us continue to be as superstitious, and even idolatrous (if they will have it so) like the ancient Greeks and Romans, if there is no other remedy but this for the evil. There will never be any great harm in our heathenish practices, provided we continue (as I hope we always shall) to be peaceful amongst ourselves, and kind to strangers, even when we know for certain they are none of our friends.

friends. Let ministers and priests, pastors and friars, vent their spleen in bitter declamations against each other's tenets and opinions, and laugh at one because he kneels like a heathen to a picture; and at another, because he has a Mahometan abhorrence for it; my wish shall never go farther, than that hot-headed zealots may cease to scoff at each other, and abstain from unchristian as well as from unmanly invectives: that both English and Italians, Spanish and Dutch, Parisians and Genevese, and in fine Turks, Jews, and Christians may be civil and humane to each other whenever chance shall bring them together, and whenever they shall stand in need of each other's benevolence and bounty.

C H A P. XXI.

AMONGST the general characteristics of the Italians, no travel-writer has ever been so sagacious or so generous as to observe that charity is one of the most conspicuous ; that charity which is christianly termed *universal love and liberality to the necessitous*.

To be convinced that I do not attribute this glorious characteristic to my countrymen out of a blind partiality, the reader needs only be apprised, that no country whatsoever abounds so much in hospitals as Italy. Let any stranger survey it from the most alpine limits of Piedmont to the remotest end of Calabria, he will scarcely find a town that does not exhibit some undeniable proofs of what I advance.

An exact detail of the Italian hospitals, together with an accurate account of their

revenues, and an enumeration of the many objects which find relief in them, would prove more tedious than interesting, were it in my power to give it. However, that the reader may form some idea of the effect produced by the spirit of charity which prevails amongst us, it will be sufficient to say, that Misson and Keyfler have both reckoned twenty-two hospitals in the single town of Florence; one of which (*L'Annunciata*) maintains three thousand foundlings, and another (*Santa Maria Nuova*) seven hundred sick. Keyfler has likewise mentioned one of the many at Genoa, which contains two thousand poor objects, and has employed some pages in describing one at Milan, which supports fifteen hundred sick, three thousand idiots and lunatics, and about five thousand foundlings: and bishop Burnet has taken notice of one at Naples, whose income amounts to something more than eighty thousand pounds sterling, and maintains

maintains still larger numbers than that at Milan.

Were these the only monuments of our charity, they would in my humble opinion give us a just claim to the honour of being as humane as any other Christian nation : and as our hospitals were chiefly erected and endowed by private and popular contributions rather than by princely munificence, they must certainly obviate that character of savageness, which travelling slanderers have obliquely cast upon us, when they have painted us as naturally inclined to cruelty and bloodshed. But many more than these are the proofs which I could bring of our natural kindness to the distressed, if I were not afraid of prolixity. Not to enter, as I said, into a tedious account of our hospitals, let me only add, that there are only few amongst my readers, who have not heard of the four chief ones at Venice ; as their large funds, together with the singularity of their musical institutions, have attracted

the attention of every stranger that has visited that town for these many years.

But it is really surprising to hear these travelling slanderers perpetually reviling our imperial Rome, and describing it as a seat of iniquity and corruption, when there is no sort of infirmity, no imaginable species of wretchedness but what may find relief in one or other of its numerous hospitals.

The benevolence of the modern Romans must have been very great, and have continued through many generations, since it is asserted with a confidence supported by many evident calculations, that the united revenues of all the cardinals residing in Italy, which upon a medium may be reckoned at four thousand pounds each, do not amount to the third part of the revenues possessed by the hospitals in that single city : a city, which for time immemorial has constantly been distinguishable above any that can possibly be named for some striking particularity. And yet the
characteristic

characteristic charity of the modern Romans, as well as that of all other Italians, has never found a single itinerant panegyrist. Keyßler only, of the many travel-writers I have read, has deigned to observe, that “ *Protestant countries cannot be compared to those where the Romish religion is professed with regard to hospitals, lazaretto’s, and other charitable foundations.*” But as it is the constant rule of protestants, never to bestow any praise upon papists without some mixture of censure, the honest German has been pleased to add, with an awkward sneer, that “ *the dread of purgatory is not the least of our incitements to charities of this kind.*” But why the dread of purgatory rather than that of hell, which might in all probability prove still more forcible? Yet, allowing Keyßler’s remark to be just, I do not see how our dread of purgatory can be a proper subject for ridicule, when it is granted that it prompts us to acts of

humanity, and is productive of such laudable and truly Christian effects. Sophistical theologians may wrangle for ever, and I may easily be persuaded that the existence of purgatory is not so certain as that of London or Constantinople : but surely we must consider those as no very bad tenets of religion that help humanity most, and have the power of inducing the opulent to share their temporal blessings with the poor.

Nor is the admittance into our hospitals rendered difficult by caviling or narrow regulations, as is often the case in other countries, where charity is so diligently anatomised, that many good things are not done, for fear improper objects should partake of them. The Italians scorn such paultry discriminations, and every person who is, or will be, an object of their charity, is by them considered as poor enough to deserve a share of it. Therefore in the greatest part of our hospitals every object of misery is freely received ;
nor

nor is there any enquiry ever made whether it is in his power to procure proper assistance at home : nor is any particular licence or certificate required from a governor, a subscriber, a parish-priest, or any such person, as is practised in other countries. The gates of such places, like the gates of heaven, are opened wide to the distressed man, to the helpless babe or orphan, to the repenting prostitute, to every creature that knocks, whenever there is room ; and when there is none, which happens but seldom, the poor are assisted from the hospital wherever they are, and attended on the least notice by its physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries.

With regard to the foundlings, those that carry them to the proper hospitals, put them in an engine at the door, ring a bell to give notice that a child has been brought, and go about their business ; and the poor infant is immediately taken care of ; nor is there any enquiry ever made

their parents : so that, those who cannot maintain their children, as well as those who will not, may send them there without the least hindrance ; certain that the public charity will supply their want of ability and tenderness.

And here let me say, that these are the children, who, every where in Italy, and in Venice especially, *are considered as the children of the state* ; and not all children indifferently, as Mr. Sharp has absurdly remarked of the Venetians. Nor is this an improper place to observe that our numerous foundling-hospitals are one of the many causes, that Italy is upon the whole much more populous than any other country of equal extent in Europe, because our poor need not be afraid of marrying, as their offspring, at the very worst, will always be maintained whenever sent to such places : and as a mark is generally put upon foundlings when they are sent to an hospital, any parent may easily have his child returned to him, whenever his

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circumstances

circumstances will permit his tenderness to operate, and take him home.

Nor are our hospitals solely destined to the natives. No such narrow way of thinking prevails amongst us. A stranger gets admittance into any of them when there is room, or is assisted at home quite as liberally as if he were a native, whatever his country or his religion may be, excepting only Jews; as their communities, wherever they are suffered, are obliged by our laws to take care of their poor and sick, whether natives or strangers. Yet this is no hardship on them, because they never voluntarily mix with the *Gobims*, as they call us, and superstitiously abhor all food that is not dressed by cooks of their own persuasion. But when a protestant or a Turk is admitted to one of our hospitals, no sort of molestation is given him on account of his creed: on the contrary, a drawn curtain hinders him from being an involuntary spectator of any of our acts of religion within the reach

reach of his sight, that his prejudices may not be hurt; as Keyfler had occasion to observe in the great hospital at Milan, and as he might have observed in many others in other parts.

At Venice many of the necessitous go to seek relief in its hospitals from the neighbouring parts of Germany; and almost every week foundlings are brought there from the free-port of Trieste. Nor does the Venetian government think this importation grievous to their state; but receives them indistinctly: and at Rome there are several hospitals solely destined to strangers, each overseen and attended by people that understand their respective languages. The French, Spaniards, and Germans, as well as some Italians not subject to the pope, have an hospital each, where they can respectively meet with still greater conveniencies than in those where every body is received indiscriminately. Let London, Paris, or any other proud metropolis

metropolis in Europe boast of any such establishment if they can.

But Italian charity is still of a more extensive nature, and embraces other objects, besides those that are only fit for hospitals. Many are the funds, and some of them very considerable, whose produce is yearly shared into competent sums, and distributed under the name of portions to poor maidens when they are willing to marry, or desirous to take the veil.

Many protestants, who have been informed of this species of charity, which is pretty general amongst us, have ridiculed us most unmercifully for allowing portions to those females who resolve to seclude themselves for ever from the world : and the witty Mr. Sharp, seeing the pope distribute *two hundred and thirty portions to as many maidens, the greater part of whom were to get husbands if they could, and the remainder to dedicate themselves to a monastic life*, instead of suffering his good-nature to operate and giving due praise to

so noble a distribution, has scurrilously termed it *a trick*, because it was accompanied by *his holiness' benediction*. A very vile trick indeed! But trick or no trick, does Mr. Sharp think it possible for all females in Rome, or elsewhere, to provide themselves with lawful mates? He would be ridiculous if he was to answer me in the affirmative, because the contrary may easily be observed in any country, and especially in his own, as I have already had occasion to remark. Why then should we be so narrow-minded, or rather so hard-hearted, as to deny our charity to those poor girls, who have no bridegrooms ready to take them to the altar whenever a little sum is ready to begin housekeeping? Why are we not to help those, who, either through a mistaken piety or impossibility of marrying, resolve to end their days in celibacy, rather within than without the walls of a monastery? But we give a double portion to those who turn nuns, and this, in Mr. Sharp's opinion,

opinion, is an unpardonable absurdity. Why, Sir? Twenty or thirty crowns will easily provide a poor maiden a husband; but twenty or thirty crowns are not sufficient to defray the expence, if she has a mind to turn nun. Why therefore should she not be enabled by a larger sum to devote herself to that way of life which she prefers to any other? Does Mr. Sharp think, that a double portion is an incitement to induce our poor girls to turn nuns rather than marry, supposing both in their option? If he really thinks so, I must advise him to study nature over again, and under some female preceptor too.

Besides the funds thus applied in many parts of Italy to the marrying of poor maidens, or placing them in nunneries, we have some others in many places of a kind no less charitable. I mean those, that have been instituted to prevent the extortions of usurers, by which the distresses of the poor are extremely aggravated in other countries. From these funds

sands the poor generally receive two thirds of the value of their pledges without paying any interest for small sums, and only one or two per cent. for sums considerable. Such sums they may keep in their hands for eighteen months, and then return to take their goods out of pawn. But should they forfeit them, they are sold by auction, and the surplus paid them. Why do not all Christian nations adopt this Italian scheme of relieving their poor, ever subject to the rapacious extortions of hard-hearted Jews or merciless pawnbrokers?

I need not mention here that other kind of charity so common amongst the Italians, of giving alms to street-beggars. This great fault of ours is generally known, thanks to those ultramontane politicians who have so often blamed us for it in their wise accounts of our country, pretending that this practice of ours encourages idleness, and of course destroys industry.

To

To this heavy charge I have nothing to answer, but that I hope my countrymen will never adopt such outlandish politics. A virtuous habit will scarcely be kept up, but by a frequent repetition of virtuous acts, let them be ever so small : and were we to philosophise thus deeply, and endeavour subtilly to distinguish between the proper and improper objects of our benevolence, I am afraid that too many of us would soon be in danger of losing the habit of being charitable at all. I will allow that many of our street-beggars do not deserve alms, and that many of them are mere idlers, who could fall upon better ways of living than that of collecting a precarious subsistence in our streets. Yet no body was ever ruined, I think, by giving farthings and half-pence to street-beggars, and no nation was ever distressed by this kind of charity. Therefore I cannot heartily join with those who would be for denying all sort of compassion to
such

such poor wretches, whose mental faculties are so contracted or so depraved, as to be incapable of chusing less uncertain and less miserable means of subsistence.

C H A P. XXII.

AFTER what I have said in general of the Italians, I ought to take notice of those peculiarities of character which remarkably distinguish the people of one Italian district from that of another.

Superficial travellers are apt to speak of them in the mass; and they cannot fall into a greater mistake. There is very little difference, comparatively speaking, between the several provinces of England, because all their inhabitants live under the same laws, speak dialects of the same tongue much nearer each other than the dialects of Italy, and have a much greater intercourse between themselves than the Italians have had these many ages. No nations, distinguished by different names, vary more from each other in almost every respect than those which go under the common name of Italians: but still these

provincial discriminations require a very masterly hand in the description; and I am sure I feel my abilities to be very disproportionate to the task. It would not be easy for a connoisseur in painting to make a by-stander comprehend the nice varieties in each particular style of our capital painters by the mere force of verbal description. Different customs and manners, as well as different tints and colours, border so much upon each other, that many of them have scarcely any proper name, though they may be properly discriminated by the eye, and by the judgement of the accurate observer of both. It is therefore as easy to say, that the English are good-natured, the Scotch selfish, the French fickle, the Spaniards grave, the Germans heavy, and the Swiss uncouth, as that Raphael's style is grand, Michelangelo's robust, Correggio's graceful, Carracci's bold, Titian's full of truth, and so forth. But what clear notions do such epitomizing epithets convey to the mind

mind of those who wish to know something positive about the styles of painters and the characters of nations?

However, that I may not leave so ample a topic quite untouched, I will here endeavour to give my reader what satisfaction I can upon the several characteristics of the Italians.

C H A P. XXIII.

TO begin therefore with the Piedmontese, who are the most alpine nation of Italy, I must observe, that one of the chief qualities which distinguish them from all other Italians, is their want of chearfulness. A stranger travelling through Italy may easily observe, that all the nations there have in general very gay countenances, and visibly appear much inclined to jollity by their frequent and obstreperous laughing. But take a walk along any place of public resort in any of the Piedmontese towns, and you will presently perceive that almost every face looks cloudy and full of sullen gravity.

There are many peculiarities besides this, that render the Piedmontese unlike the other Italians. Among other things, it is very remarkable, that Piedmont never
produced

produced a single poet, as far as the records of the country can go : whereas there is no province of Italy but what can boast of some poet, ancient or modern. Nay, the inhabitants of several Italian provinces have in general so brisk a vein of poetry running through them, that a great many of the people can even sing verses extempore ; and some of them do it in such a manner, that I have often been amazed at the readiness of their expressions. The Piedmontese have no such knack, and are even insensible to the beauties of those Orlando's and Goffredo's, which will instantly warm a Roman, a Tuscan, a Venetian, and a Neapolitan. And yet the Piedmontese are not deficient in several branches of learning, and some of them have succeeded tolerably well in civil law, physic, and the mathematics.

It is likewise observable of these people, that none of them ever attained to any degree of excellence in the polite arts : and it is but lately that they can boast of

(*Cavaliero Bomonte*) a statuary, (*Signor Ladetto*) and some architects (*Conte Alfieri*, *Signor Borra*, and others) who yet, to say the truth, are far inferiour to numberless artists produced by all other provinces of Italy.

But if the Piedmontese are not to be compared with the Tuscans and other Italians for that brilliancy of imagination which poetry and the polite arts require, they have, on the other hand, greatly the advantage when considered as soldiers. Though their troops have never been very numerous, every body conversant in history knows the brave stand they have made for some centuries past against the French, Spaniards, and Germans whenever they were invaded by these nations. It is true that they have been frequently overpowered by more numerous forces; they have so constantly and quickly recovered after every defeat, that the French in particular have had reason enough for their proverbial saying, that "*Le Piémont*
"*est*

" est la sépulture des Francois," Piedmont is the burying-place of the French.

Such is the martial spirit in Piedmont, that even the grossest peasants are ambitious of appearing in a military character: and it is so usual a sight to see them follow the plow in the cast-off cloaths of the soldiery, that a stranger, unacquainted with their custom of buying up those cloaths for use, would be apt to think Piedmont abounded in soldiers even more than the king of Prussia's dominions.

The skill of the Piedmontese in fortification is also very great; and their *Bertola's* and *Pinto's* have shown as much genius as the *Vaubans* and *Coborns* in rendering impregnable several places, which inferiour engineers would only have made strong. The French have many times hovered about La Brunette, Fenestrelles, and Exilles; but they never dared to besiege them: and when Cuneo, Demont, Alexandria, and some other of their fortresses are quite finished, it will in all

probability prove next to impossible for the French armies ever to penetrate into Italy without a previous leave from the Piedmontese.

The nobility of Piedmont, which are very numerous, considering the extent of the country, affect much the French manners, as well as the French language: and yet they are far from resembling their archetypes, wanting much of that affability, easy elegance, and alertness, for which the French nobility are so remarkable. The Turinese nobles are in general very proud of their descent, and most of them disdain all familiar intercourse with any of those among their fellow-subjects whom they think a degree below themselves: or if they condescend to speak to them, and admit them to some kind of familiarity, their condescension is such an odd mixture of urbanity and haughtiness, that proves very disgustful to men of any parts and spirit. Many amongst that nobility have obtained the reputation of good

politicians and skilful negotiators of public affairs : but they are upon the whole so much bent to war, and so averse to all sort of scientific acquisitions, that very few of them know the Italian language, fewer still the Latin, and I never heard of any who could read the Greek alphabet.

Nor is the second rank in Piedmont much more eager than the first after academical knowledge. No nation of Italy has so many individuals of the second rank so ignorant as the Piedmontese. Some of them, as I said, have been good physicians, lawyers, and mathematicians: but in general they are not inclined to study. At least I never found it very entertaining to enter their *conversazione's*, their coffee-houses, and other places of public resort, and listen to their common talk, which is too often frivolous and insipid. And they are withal so punctilious and so ready to draw the sword, that more duels are fought

fought in Piedmont than in all the rest of Italy taken together.

Both the first and second rank of women amongst them are likewise very ignorant. A few French romances form the libraries of those that can read : and it is not in Piedmont that one must expect to be rationally entertained in the society of the fair. A few of them plunge into gross vice ; but the greatest part into stupid bigotry, even when still young and handsome ; and very few are those, who know how to keep alike distant from these two extremes, and find means at the same time to be agreeable company.

The artisans and peasantry of Piedmont are the best part of that nation. Scarcely the Tuscans and the Genoese can cope with them for industry and skill in manufactures and husbandry. Their manufactures are daily rising, to the no small prejudice of their neighbours the French ; and few countries in Europe are made so beautiful

beautiful as theirs by cultivation, the best English provinces not excepted.

To finish the picture of the Piedmontese, they are great admirers of the French, hate the Genoese, despise all other Italians, and are not beloved by any body, though they are far from being wanting in hospitality after their own manner to all sorts of strangers, and even to those whom they hate and despise.

I need not enlarge on the character of the Monferrine, Savoyards, and other subjects of his Sardinian majesty, because they do not differ much from the Piedmontese. The inhabitants of Savoy only, are distinguishable from their other fellow-subjects by their greater plainness of manners and superior skill in thriftiness: both which qualities in them are the natural effects of the barrenness of their mountains.

Mr. Sharp has expatiated pretty largely on the cicisbeo's and murderers of Italy. But his affirmations on these two heads,
which

which are undoubtedly most calumnious when applied to the Italians in general, (as he has done) prove still more so when applied to the Piedmontese in particular. Neither of the two characteristics belong in the least to this nation, as the men and women throughout the country are perfect strangers to the refined notions of Platonic love, and mix in mutual intercourse exactly after the manner of the French and English; and the Piedmontese weapon in deciding sudden quarrels is the sword, as I said, and not the dagger.

C H A P. XXIV.

SOUTH of Piedmont, and along-shore of the Tyrrhene sea, lie the small, but populous dominions of the Genoese republic.

The people of this country have been much exposed in ancient days to the malignity of wit, and many of the Roman poets have taken much freedom with the ancient Ligurians. Yet, whatever truth there may be in the sarcastic sayings of Virgil, Silius Italicus, Aufonius, and others, I think that a proud ostentation of learning rather than sober reason has induced many a modern to tread in their footsteps. As a native of Turin, I could not help being brought up in an unjust aversion to the Genoese: an aversion very common among neighbouring nations, and very difficult for human reason to conquer

conquer at any time of life. But having had occasion, twice in my days, and at distant periods, to pass some months at Genoa, and to visit the greatest part of the republic's territories, I own I could not find in that people any ground for the insolent reproach, that *their men are as devoid of faith, and their women of shame, as their hills are of wood, and their sea of fishes* *.

It is true that the Tyrrhene sea does not greatly abound in fish, and the rocky tops of the Ligurian mountains are not much shaded by firs and oaks. But integrity in men, and modesty in women are quite as common throughout the Genoese country as any where else. No country was ever wanting in specious slanderers : but before we credit a few sayings against the ancient Ligurians, or the modern

* De Genua quid ais ? Montes, mare, foemina, virque
Sunt sine arboribus, pisce, pudore, fide.

Genoese, let us consider what degree of belief will be due from posterity to the present poets of England and France when they characterise each other. For my part, instead of persisting in my early ridiculous antipathy to the Genoese, I have often said, that, were it in my power to collect in any particular place all the friends I have scattered in many, I would certainly rather chuse to live with them at Genoa than in any other town I ever saw; because there the government is mild, the climate soft, the habitations large and clean, and the whole face of the country most romantically beautiful.

The Genoese nobles are in general affable, polite, and very knowing: and their great ladies much better acquainted with books than any other set of Italian ladies. They all pique themselves upon speaking Italian and French with great correctness; and men may converse in their hearing upon the belles-lettres, and even upon trade and politics, without any breach

breach of civility ; which would not be the case in almost all other parts of Italy ; where common conversation is generally not very interesting when the fair are present.

With regard to the low people, the Genoese are the most laborious and industrious that ever fell under my observation. Nor are they wanting in bravery ; as the Germans have experienced to their cost in the last Italian war, when that army of theirs which had defeated forty or fifty thousand French at Piacenza, was by the Genoese populace impetuously attacked, routed, and put to a most ignominious flight.

Trade in Genoa is far from being derogatory to nobility, as I have already observed : so that even the chief senators and members of government engage in it publicly, and in their own names. The Piedmontese differ so much from them in this particular, that no man professing
commerce,

commerce, except a banker, is allowed in Piedmont to wear a sword.

I cannot help taking notice here, that the Genoese have the misfortune of reckoning amongst their enemies many of the English nation; namely a very large number of those despicable wretches who go in this kingdom under the appellation of the Grub-street writers.

These tremendous myrmidons are perpetually venting their formidable rage in your news-papers against the Genoese for two powerful reasons. The one is, that those republicans appear unwilling to lose Corsica tamely; and such an unwillingness in them is not reconcileable with the Grub-street notions of liberty and property. The other is, that the Genoese are so very wicked as to permit their artificers to build ships of war, and sell them to the French and Spaniards.

As to the first of these two points I have little to say, because little I think is necessary to be said. No sovereign country

is willing to suffer the independency of its provinces, and England as little as any other : besides my present business is not to launch into a nice discussion of the political interests of the Italian sovereigns, but only to speak of the Italian manners and customs. But as to the second point, it is not a little surprising to hear the Genoese so often abused for doing what they have an indisputable right to do ? Ship-building is a manufacture at Genoa, as much as making stuff at Norwich : and what foreign nation has any right to hinder the manufacturers of either town from selling the products of their labour and ingenuity ? When powder and ball are sold to the pirates of Algiers and Tunis, one would think that ships might also be sold to Spaniards and French without any danger of censure.

C H A P. XXV.

FROM the Genoëse and Piedmontese territories we enter Lombardy, under which denomination a large tract of western Italy is comprehended, whose metropolis is Milan.

The inhabitants of Lombardy, and the Milanese especially, value themselves upon their being *de bon cœur*: a phrase which in the spelling appears to be French, though it be somewhat different in the meaning as well as in the pronunciation, answering with much exactness to the English adjective *good-natured*. Nor do the Milanese boast unjustly of this good quality, which is so incontrovertibly granted to them by all other Italians, that they are perhaps the only nation in the world not hated by their neighbours. The Piedmontese, as I said, hate the Genoese;

the Genoese detest the Piedmontese, and have no great kindness for the Tuscans : the Tuscans are not very fond of the Venetians or the Romans ; the Romans are far from abounding in good will to the Neapolitans ; and so round. This foolish world is so formed, that almost every nation is actuated by some ridiculous antipathy towards another, generally without knowing why. But the Milanese are, much to their honour, an exception to the general rule, and enjoy the privilege of being loved by all their neighbours, or at least looked upon without any kind of aversion : and this noble privilege they certainly owe to their universal candour and cordiality.

They are commonly compared to the Germans for their plain honesty, and to the French for their fondness of pomp and elegance in equipages and household furniture : and I have a mind to add, that they resemble likewise the English in their love of good eating, as well as in
 their

their talking rather too long and too often about it; which has procured them the ludicrous appellation of *Lupi Lombardi*, that is, *Devourers of meat*.

Not only the generality of the Milanese nobles, but a great number of their gentry and merchants, keep open tables, at which plenty and facetiousness preside. Mr. Sharp has observed, that the Neapolitans keep more coaches in proportion than even the English and the French. The same remark he might have made with regard to the Milanese, had he known any thing of their town: and their great number of coaches is not merely the effect of their love of pomp and show, as Mr. Sharp observes with his usual slyness, but the natural consequence of the riches of both countries, both fertile to a proverb.

The Milanese are likewise remarkable amongst the Italians for their love of rural amusements. They generally pass the greatest part of the summer and the

whole autumn in the country; and they have good reasons for so doing, as that hilly province of theirs called *Monte di Brianza*, where their country-houses chiefly lie, is in my opinion the most delightful in all Italy for the variety of its landshapes, the gentleness of its rivers, and the multitude of its lakes *. There they retire as soon as the season begins to grow hot, and pass the time in a perpetual round of merriment, eating, drinking, dancing, and visiting; and contributing small sums towards giving portions to the pretty wenches in their neighbourhood, in order to marry them instantly to their sweethearts. There the richest people have their cappuccina's; that is, a part of their country-houses built after the manner of a capuchin-convent distributed into many small bedrooms, like cells, for the reception of

* From a small town called Galbiate in this province, seven of those lakes are seen.

their

their visitors who are always welcome, provided they come fully resolved to eat plentifully, to talk loud, and to be very merry.

Of the Mantuans, whose country forms another part of Austrian Lombardy, I have little to say, but that they resemble the Milanese as little things resemble great things. The same may be said with regard to the inhabitants of the small states of Parma and Modena. Little nations have no very remarkable character of their own, but borrow it from their more considerable neighbours.

C H A P. XXVI.

LET us now enter the dominions of the Venetians, whose government, though it has continued the same for many centuries, has either been exalted as the most perfect, or censured as the very worst, by innumerable scribblers, much to the honour of their political sagacity, which led them into such opposite extremes in their accounts of this renowned commonwealth.

When Henry VIII. first thought of having a college of physicians in this metropolis, he honoured the Italians so far as to declare in the letters patent granted for that purpose, that * in Italy *there were commonwealths well constituted*; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Venice

* *Itaque partim bene institutarum civitatum in Italia et aliis multis nationibus exemplum imitati, partim, &c.*

was not excluded from that kind of eulogy, because in point of arts and sciences Venice was then as famous as Rome and Florence.

But the favourable opinion entertained of us by king Henry, was soon after indirectly opposed, and with much vehemence, by a very great number of writers, who being actuated by an over-violent zeal, whilst they endeavoured to bring the Christian religion back to its primitive simplicity, thought proper to excite in many persons so deep a hatred to the inhabitants of Italy, that the revolution of two centuries has not yet been able to obliterate it entirely, as may be seen in the bitter invectives we read so often in the English news-papers against the several nations of Italy, and in the frequent accounts which bigotted travellers still give of them in print.

Amongst those who were most lavish of abuse and slander upon the Italians when the reformation was first introduced
in

in this kingdom, one of the foremost was Roger Ascham, preceptor to queen Elizabeth, whose writings were lately dug out of obscurity by means of a new edition.

Ascham's writings are indeed as full of Greek and Latin as they can hold : but they breathe so virulent a spirit of unchristian enmity to our fellow-creatures on the other side of the Alps, (by whom he certainly was never offended) that, notwithstanding the erudition with which they are stuffed, it had surely been better to let them lie for ever in that lucky darkness in which they were buried, if it be true that fanaticism can never be very beneficial to mankind, and that it is better we should be universally benevolent than universally learned.

For a specimen of the antipathy which animated Ascham, let me only copy out of his school-master a few of those passages with regard to the Italians in general, and the Venetians in particular.

" I was

“ *I was once in Italie myselfe,*” says he ;
 “ *but, thanks God, my abode there was but*
 “ *NINE DAYS : and yet I sawe in that*
 “ *little tyme, in one citie, more libertie to*
 “ *sinne, than ever I heard tell of in our*
 “ *noble citie of London in nine years.*”

So vile a period as this could not have fallen from any pen, but that of a furious fanatic. Ascham ran about Italy for the space of *nine days only*, and must of course have staid but *a few hours* in each of those Italian cities which he visited. And how was it possible for him *to see* in a few hours more wickedness in one of those cities, than he ever *heard of* in London itself, which, if you credit him, was still overspread in his time with irreligion and vices of every kind ?

And how could Ascham ascertain *in a few hours*, that his Italian contemporaries were sunk “ *in all corrupt manners and*
 “ *licenciousefness of life* ? That they had “ *in*
 “ *more reverence the triumphs of Petrarche*
 “ *than the Genesis of Moses ; made more*
 “ *accounte*

“ *accounte of Tullies offices than of St. Pauls*
 “ *epistles ; and of a tale in Boccace than a*
 “ *story in the bible ? That they did*
 “ *counte as fables the holy misteries of Chris-*
 “ *tian religion, and his gospell onely served*
 “ *their civill policie ?*” That they did “ *care*
 “ *for no scripture ; made no counte of generall*
 “ *counsels ; contemned the consent of the*
 “ *church ; moked the pope, railed on Luther,*
 “ *allowed neither side, and liked none but*
 “ *onely themselves ?*” How could he per-
 suade himself in a few hours, or even in
 nine days, that “ *the marke the Italianes*
 “ *shote at, the ende they looked for, the*
 “ *heaven they desired, was only their*
 “ *present pleasure and profit ?*” That they
 were “ *Epicures in eating, and Atheists in*
 “ *doctrine ?*” By what means could he
 verify in so short a time, that in Venice it
 was “ *counted good policie, when there were*
 “ *four or five brethren in one familie, one*
 “ *only to marry, and all the rest to vaulter*
 “ *with as little shame in open lecherie as*
 “ *swine do in the common myre ?*”

These

These and other such assertions by Ascham, must surely appear quite as shocking as the flaver of a mad dog to any body that is ever so little acquainted with human nature, and ever so little versed in the Italian history and literature of Ascham's times. The Italians in general, and the Venetians in particular, never deserved the praise of universal sanctity more than any other nation: but neither were they such brutes as they are represented by that hot-headed slanderer.

However, I do not much wonder at the infamous accusations of Ascham. Many, and too many, have been the holy men in those blessed times (Protestants as well as well as Papists) who reciprocally endeavoured to blacken each other's nations in such abominable strains. But I must wonder a little at the modern biographer of Ascham, who, instead of censuring the outrageous madness of those accusations, has passed over them in shameful silence,

and

and only remarked with an admirable meekness, that Ascham in his school-master *has mentioned the vices of Venice with great severity*. In this age of good sense and moderation it ought to be the duty of every honest man, whenever occasion offers, to speak with contempt and abhorrence of the many odious enthusiasts who wrote in the times of Ascham; and no eminence of learning, or affectation of holiness, ought to make us overlook the detestable brutality of him, who, as far as he could, endeavoured thus to set the great republic of mankind by the ears, and to kindle in one part of the human species a violent and unextinguishable hatred against the other.

And now, Mr. Sharp, you who with so much candour and prettiness have trod in Ascham's footsteps, though scarcely half so well stored with Greek and Latin, let me intreat you, good Sir, to look again into the sermon preached by our naughty Jesuit

Jesuit against queen Elizabeth* : compare it carefully with the few paragraphs here transcribed out of her preceptor's works, and tell me ingenuously which of the two deserves best a panegyric from your elegant pen.

Mr. Sharp, whose rage against the Venetians is no less than Ascham's, has already given me room to tell my readers what he is to think about their pretended universal corruption. To what I said on this particular, I must add their common saying, that to make a Venetian happy, three things are required: *La mattina una messeta, l'apodisnar una basseta, e la sera una donneta*; which may be thus Englished: *a short mass in the morning, a little gaming in the afternoon, and a pretty girl in the evening*. And here I own that this saying, which certainly contains the chief

* See Mr. Sharp's thirty-ninth letter, in which he gives us the substance of an Italian sermon, as he had it from a Roman catholic lady.

outlines of the Venetians' character, does not set their morals in the most favourable light. But while, upon the testimony of their own words, we condemn them for some bad qualities, (which are pretty universal in Mr. Sharp's country as well as in Venice) let us likewise take notice, that the same common saying which apprises us of their capital vices, informs us also of their having at least some regard to their religion. It is true, that such slight performances of religious duties will be far from rendering them perfect; but people whose principal duty is their first morning-thought, cannot be so deeply sunk into corruption as the ancient Sharps and modern Aschams would make us believe. The Venetians are indeed more addicted to sensuality than more northern nations, and love cards rather too passionately: but their fondness for cards and women excludes them not from the possession of many virtues and good qualities very estimable and useful

useful in society. They are most remarkably temperate in their way of living, though very liberal in spending, and though few towns in Europe are so plentifully furnished with all kinds of provisions and articles of luxury as theirs: they are not addicted to harsh censures of their neighbours, though they are far from contemning themselves; and they speak with charity and reserve of other people's errors and foibles. They are so characteristically tender-hearted, that the least affectionate word melts them at once, makes them lay aside any animosity, and suddenly reconciles them to those whom they disliked before. Of this quality in them, strong traces are presently discovered in their very dialect, which seems almost composed of nothing else, but of kind words and endearing epithets.

However, this humane turn of mind shows itself much seldomer in their nobility than in the people. The nobles indeed, if you listen to their speech,

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seem, like other Venetians, to love a warm exchange of terms of kindness with their equals: they hug, and kiss, and bow deep, and bless each other whenever they meet. But there is no need of great penetration to find, that all this kindness amongst them is a farce. The members of an Aristocracy cannot be very susceptible of the tender passions, because their incessant competition for power renders them in a good measure insensible to any thing else, and of course to the sweets of friendship: and with regard to their inferiours, though they speak to them in a very soothing tone, yet one may easily discover that they would rather chuse to impress them with an awe of their superiority, than to be beloved. With an art peculiar to themselves, they mix their kindness with a stateliness and disregard that certainly cannot proceed from natural goodness and benevolence.

It is well known that the Venetian nobles, together with the very meanest of their

their servants and dependants, are forbidden by a most severe law to speak or hold any correspondence with any person whatsoever who resides in Venice in a public character from any foreign sovereign, or even with the servants and dependants of such persons.

The dread of this law is very great amongst them: I have seen myself one of their most powerful senators turn back precipitately, on being told at a friend's door, that the hair-dresser of a foreign minister was with the gentleman whom he came to visit. Nay, it is a common custom there, when any burghers, merchant, or other person of that class, gives a ball or other public entertainment in his house (as it often happens in carnival time) to have a man at the door with the livery of a foreign minister on his back, merely to fright away the nobles or their domestics, who will often endeavour to force themselves in on such occasions. Even the keeper of a coffee-house, who is

desirous to get rid of the nobles, their servants and dependants who frequent his shop, needs only contrive to have a servant of any foreign minister to come twice or thrice to drink a dish of coffee there, and his troublesome customers will presently disappear. And as all strangers of any distinction generally frequent the houses of the foreign ministers, the nobles dare not see them often, and even shun those places where strangers resort most. By these means they are almost reduced to the necessity of only conversing among themselves; and as very few of them are ever allowed to travel by the inquisitors of state (without whose permission they will scarcely venture to go so far as their country-houses when situated at any considerable distance from Venice) their manners are borrowed from no nation (as is partly the case with all other Italians) but are perfectly their own, and have not changed for many centuries.

The

The force of this law; their being brought up with a notion that they are equal in dignity to sovereign princes; their constant attendance on public counsels; their perpetual intriguing, either to acquire power to themselves or diminish it in others; their wearing a dress considerably different from that of other men; the abject demeanour of their inferiors towards them, whom they have long accustomed to tremble at the frown of the very least among them: their gross ignorance of the laws, customs, and manners of other nations, and several other such causes, render the Venetian nobility an object of curiosity, and worthy the critical examination of an intelligent foreigner, who endeavours after an enlarged knowledge of mankind by seeing in what manner human nature shows itself in all varieties of situation. Yet so it happens, that it is but seldom any foreigner is animated by this kind of curiosity. Instead of conquering that little aversion

which naturally arises in us towards those who make it a point to render themselves difficult of access, the generality of foreigners shun the conversation of the Venetian nobles, or grow presently sick of it, on discovering that it is too uniform, local, and egotistical at the commencement of their acquaintance. But let acquaintance ripen a while into familiarity, as it soon does with the help of some dexterity and patience ; and the oddest compositions in the world will be found among them ; and this arising from their contracted habits of conversation, joined by a singular combination to an enlarged practice of important and delicate business of state. One may soon discover amongst them so many instances of openness and reserve, of sagacity and imprudence, of courage and timidity, of prodigality and thriftiness, of knowledge and ignorance, and many other opposite qualities so perfectly blended together in the same individual,

vidual, that I know no set of men in Europe so much worth the trouble of being thoroughly sifted as the noblemen of Venice. With regard to the Venetian people, those who want to keep fair with their nobles, or make them friends, have a very ready means of admittance to their kindness, by only praising them in the fulsomest terms, making them believe that their commonwealth is one of the most formidable powers upon earth, and that themselves, individually, are the most knowing, generous, and respectable people in the world: and I do not know whether it is more shocking or more diverting to see how open the generality of the Venetian nobles are to the vilest flattery.

However, though the people of Venice be great flatterers of their *paroni's*, or *masters*, (so they call their nobles) yet they proved in general very pleasing to me for the space of about five years that I

lived there at different periods. They are indeed not more easy of access to foreigners than the nobles themselves, on account of the great confluence of strangers who continually resort in numbers to their town; and they justly think it imprudent to admit them easily under their roofs and to their familiarity. But when a stranger is once declared a friend, it is not easy to give an idea of their cordiality and attachment to him. Few of them are fond of seeing their masters within their doors, but easily associate with their equals, or with such foreigners as have lived so long amongst them as to be known for prudent and joyous men. I say *joyous*, because without such a quality no body is welcome to a Venetian. *Co no i xe mati no li volemo*, "if they are not joyous, we will not have them," is another of their most frequent sayings.

Of their lowest people, and especially of their gondoliers, I need not say much,
because

because almost all travel-writers have taken abundant notice of their manners and peculiarities. It is already well known that in general they pique themselves much on their lively sayings and repartees; on their being great connoisseurs in theatrical matters; and that they are to be much depended upon in assisting a love-intrigue.

To these outlines of the gondoliers' character, I will only add, that they are in general very much taken with verse and rhyme, and that almost all of them, even their women, can repeat the poems of Ariosto and Tasso, besides many compositions in their own dialect, when they are wrote in that kind of stanza's which we call *ottava rima*. Such stanza's and poems they are very fond of singing, particularly by moon-shine. And as the tune to which they sing them is ancient; and very fine in the opinion of our musicians, my musical reader cannot be displeased

pleased to have it here, as signor Giardini has done me the favour to write it for me.

As to the customs and manners of those provinces of Italy, which belong to the republic, they are considerably different from those of Venice, and approach nearly to those of Austrian Lombardy. The people of Brescia * made it formerly a point of honour to be great bullies: and I remember the time myself, when it was dangerous to have any dealings with them, as they were much inclined to quarrel merely for a whim, and would presently challenge one to fight with pistol or blunderbuss. And when it was the fashion amongst our great folks to have an enemy treacherously murdered, a bravo was easily hired amongst the low people of this town and province. But

* Brescia is the capital of a fine Venetian province, that contains very near a million of inhabitants.

Tasso alla Veneziana

Intanto Ermi...nia fra l'ombrese piante D'antica

fel...va dal Cavallo è scor...ta Nè più governa il

fren... la man treman...te E mezza quasi

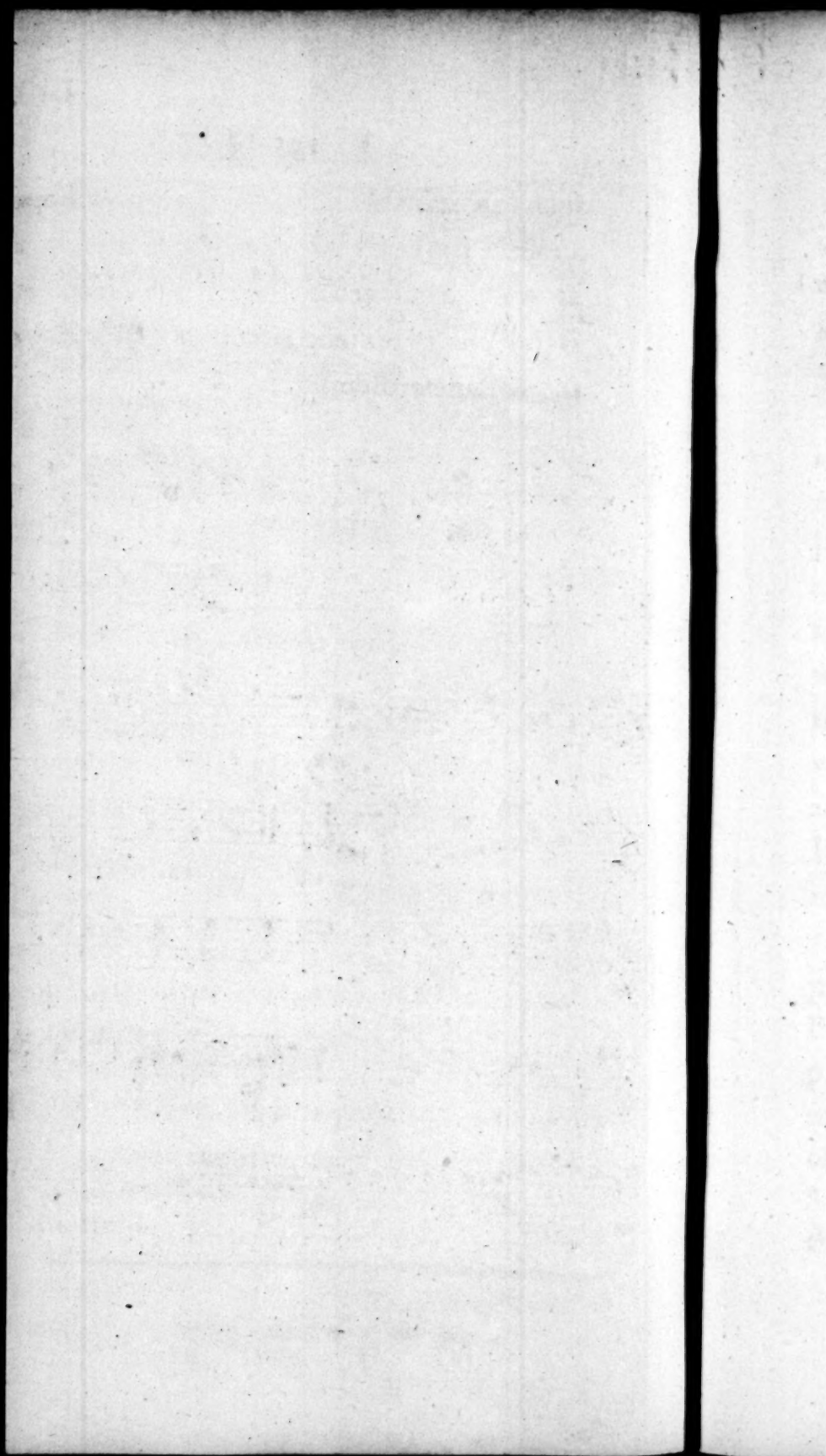
pa...r tra viva e mor...

...ta per tante fratte si raggiara e

tan...te Il corridor che in su abaliala porta che al

fin dagli occhi altrui pur si di...le...gua Ed è foverchio o.

ma... i ch'altri la se...gua.



such abominable customs have now been abolished many years; and the Brescians as well as all other Venetian subjects in Italy, are at present almost as civilized as the Milanese themselves.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXVII.

IT has been often asserted by writers of travels, that many of the Italian provinces are but thinly inhabited, and that the badness of the government is the cause of their depopulation. If there be any truth in this remark, it is certainly with regard to Ferrara and its territory.

This town, at which from the Venetian we enter the Papal dominions, had formerly a pretty good reputation in the time of its dukes, not only on account of its populousness, but also by reason of the many men of genius and learning who flourished within its walls ; among whom it is sufficient to mention Ariosto and Tasso, who both happened to compose there those epic poems, which never were rivalled by any similar production, that of Milton only excepted. For one
city

city to have entertained two epic poets of the first rate, is a rare honour; and such, as no other town either ancient or modern can possibly boast of.

The natives of this duchy, which I have only visited in a cursory manner, are very modest and ceremonious, if one may judge of their private deportment by what they appear in their places of public resort. By virtue of an ancient privilege, whereof they are not a little proud, even their taylors and coblers can strut about with a sword at their side. This would appear ridiculous in any other part of Italy, where it is the custom of gentlemen only to wear a sword; and the advantage derived to the Ferrarese from this privilege is not very considerable, as it is limited to the furnishing the towns and provinces around with skilful fencing-masters; nor is it unlikely that the name of Ferrara, still given to the sword by the Scotch Highlanders, came originally from thence.

From

From this duchy we enter the state of Bologna, of which the pope is likewise possessed. Bologna has been much renowned for many ages on account of its university, which boasts of being the most ancient in Europe, and even to this day preserves a kind of pre-eminence over all other Italian universities, as is said to be furnished with learned professors more abundantly than any other, though their stipends are much smaller.

The nobility and genteel people of Bologna have long possessed the reputation of being upon the whole more acquainted with books than those of other Italian towns ; and in my short stay there I found no reason for contradicting the public opinion, as I could not help observing, that several of their women apply to various branches of learning. It is certain that no town in Italy can boast at present of three such sisters as the Zanotti's, who have greatly improved an Italian epic poem

poem of the burlesque kind by their translation in their own dialect: nor have we any woman that can be compared with Laura Bassi, who after having regularly gone through the studies usual in universities, and held the usual public disputations, took the degree of doctor when but eighteen years old, and was afterwards made professor of natural history and mathematics, which she has long read to numerous hearers, hiding her petticoats with the professorial gown.

Bologna is likewise famous for the great number of excellent painters it has produced, at whose head are placed Guido Reni, and three or four of the Caracci-family.

The Bolognese populace are reckoned even more witty and facetious than the Venetian gondoliers; and many of their lively sayings and humorous stories are repeated, which, as we say, might force a laugh from a bishop.

Of the Romagna, Umbria, and other papal provinces, I have little to say, as I have only crossed them hastily. It is affirmed that their inhabitants, the Romagnole especially, are remarkable for their rudeness and ferocious temper. And indeed, if general and frequent swearing may be taken as a sure mark of such bad qualities, they are not wronged when they are so characterised, as in no part of Italy were my ears more and oftener offended than in Romagna. However, in several of its towns I have had opportunities to converse with some of the better sort, and found them as amiable and polite, as those of Ancona and other towns of the Marca, where I have resided longer, and where amiable and polite people are far from being rare.

But leaving the ecclesiastical provinces, let us come to their famous metropolis, which it is scarce possible to pass a whole day in any polite part of Europe without hearing mentioned. And here let me premise,

premise, that we must not form our judgment of the modern Romans upon the poor narrations of Mr. Sharp and other such miserable critics, who never take notice of any thing within the walls of modern Rome, but pictures, statues, and bassorelievo's, or masses, processions, and benedictions.

It is true, as these quicksighted gentry have cunningly and repeatedly remarked, that the present Romans cannot by any means be brought into any sort of comparison with their predecessors of twenty centuries ago, nor can they boast any longer of Camillus's and Fabius's, or of Cesar's and Catõ's. It is besides a most certain fact, that their empire does not now extend so far as the Ister and the Euphrates, as it did in times of yore. But as no body can reasonably be made answerable for the changes brought about by the unavoidable revolutions of time, and as no modern nation can enter into any near comparison with the ancient Romans,

to what end do these learned travellers reproach the present Romans with a degeneracy which could not be avoided, and with a diminution of power which was effected by an irresistible concurrence of causes assisted by a long series of centuries?

If, instead of forming unfair parallels between the ancient and the modern Romans, our learned travellers would endeavour to display their abundant erudition in a manner a little more reasonable, they might probably be soon sensible, that, far from deserving our contempt, very few amongst the modern nations are so justly intitled to a large share of our admiration as those we call the modern Romans, in opposition to the ancient, if a large share of our admiration is justly due to those, who by a forcible and long-continued exertion of their understanding, have been able to contrive and bring about such a powerful system of ecclesiastical government in Europe, and interweave it so compactly

pactly with all its political establishments, as to make it scarce possible for any nation, however desirous to be freed from their yoke, to disentangle the strong tiffue, and act independently of the Romans, who had really no natural right to impose upon them any sort of laws.

The protestants of England and of other parts, are certainly welcome to exclaim against the politics of modern Rome, by which they have long been sufferers, and are still kept in some awe. Yet these politics, so hateful to them, can never be a proper subject of their contempt when considered with a statesman's eye. After having seen the religion of their forefathers entirely changed, their capital demolished, their imperial crown carried away to old Bysantium, their provinces parcelled out amongst several barbarians issued from the north, themselves reduced to an inconsiderable number, and almost nothing left them, but a ruined town and

a small territory made barren by devastation and time, the successors of the old Romans still found so much resource in their own minds, as to strike out a plan of dominion little less than universal, and found even then means to have their new and petty sovereign acknowledged and revered as the very first of many, who, each singly, were far more powerful than him. And how can any body dream of holding the contrivers and executors of such a scheme in contempt, and persuade themselves that the Romans were never fit for any thing else, ever since their great fall, but to draw pictures, and listen to confessions ?

To extend sovereignty over distant regions, to destroy Incas and make slaves of Caciques, to depose Nabobs and plunder the tropics and the line by means of numerous fleets and formidable armies, may be very difficult and very glorious. But still it cannot merit so large a share of our admiration as to preserve long, and with-

out

out any real forces, a superiority over superior nations, as the sons of Rome have certainly done for many ages since the overthrow of their empire, and continue still to do in a certain degree. And to what means did they betake themselves in order to bring about and firmly establish that superiority? The weak sons of Rome scarcely used any other means, but that of sending briefes and bulls about, signed by their petty new sovereign, who in the same breath calls himself a poor fisherman and a vicar of God, or an humble servant to all his humble servants, and a king over all kings. Yet these instruments had their operation from the skill of those who used them: from their studying the tempers and understanding the foibles of character in every other nation; from their profiting of the divisions between sovereign princes, or between sovereigns and subjects; and from a very extensive plan of political correspondence and constant negotiation.

But the deep-laid schemes of the Romans have at last in a great measure been defeated, and those whom they had so long subjected, have at length become sensible of their own strength, and are no more the dupes of absurdities and contradictions. I grant this: but grant me likewise, that a good share of our admiration, as I said, is certainly due to those, who hit upon a political system never thought of by any nation, ancient or modern: a system that has been enfeebled at last by its own long success, like the army of Pyrrhus by signal and repeated victories.

Yet whatever fire may kindle me when I revolve in my mind the ancient as well as the modern wonders of our imperial Rome, I am not so deep sunk into enthusiasm, as to aver, that it still contains many men like those who have by turns lorded over a great part both of the Pagan and Christian world. The Romans of to-day have somewhat degenerated from their

their ancestors; or, to speak more properly, their art of managing nations has at last been learned by other people. The principles of policy and government are at present more generally understood; and the pope is not now the only prince who has the means of an universal information and extensive influence. However to me the Romans still appear superior on the whole to all other people in Europe, or at least to all other nations in Italy; and it is owing only to an unfavourable concurrence of circumstances, that some of them do not actually govern foreign countries, as was done not a great while ago by their Mazzarini's and their Alberoni's.

As the constitution of their government gives a chance to many of them either to acquire sovereignty, or become closely connected with a sovereign, many Romans have their minds much expanded, and their imaginations made very active. For the same reason they are habitually

well-bred, careful to please, and anxious to get new friends and new connections. Their cardinals and principal monsignori's seem in general to have a greater turn for the science of politics than for any other; and it is believed that a stranger who has any public business to transact with their statesmen, had need be very dexterous and cautious not to be outwitted. As to their middling people they are much addicted to the polite arts, and above all to poetry; witness the account I have already given of their Arcadia: and as to their populace, they are rather daring and ferocious than otherwise. I cannot be more minute in the discription of them, because I had not such opportunities of observing them, as I have had with regard to other Italians.]

C H A P. XXVIII.

IT is but little more than three centuries since that province of Italy which lies between the Tyrrhene sea and the highest hills of the Apennine, was divided into eight or nine small republics, each so jealous of the rest, that for a considerable space of time they made war upon each other with as much fury, as the tenuity of their forces would possibly permit.

Such a condition of violence must always at length prove fatal : and so it happened, that at length their general downfall was brought on by their general contentions, and all those small republics, except the little one of Lucca, were reduced under subjection to an absolute sovereign, who to this day preserves the title of Grand Duke.

If the uniform accounts of numerous chroniclers and historians are to be credited,
the

the Tuscans, when in that divided and republican state, were a most ferocious and brutal people, always ready to oppress each other, and to revenge the slightest offences by murder and assassination : a thing not to be wondered at, as they had no settled body of laws, and each man was in a great measure left to the direction of his own passions.

But, after having irrecoverably lost that which in the common language of politicians has long been honoured with the name of liberty, though, as they enjoyed it, it is by no means deserving of that respectable appellation, the inclination and manners of the Tuscans underwent a very happy change. Arts and literature were the only occupations in which under their new form of government they could find full employment for their busy and restless minds. They turned to them all on a sudden ; and with such eagerness, immediately after having been subdued by the

De Medicis, that they soon forced mankind to look upon them as the only people in Europe fit to be their teachers; and as to the arts, especially those termed *the polite*, they reached in a little time to so great a perfection, as to leave almost no hopes to future cultivators ever to surpass, or even equal them.

On seeing literature and arts thus happily revived in Tuscany under the patronage of the first Medicean princes, several of the greatest among the sovereigns of Europe became sensible of their efficacy towards polishing and humanizing our species: they were therefore made desirous of having them introduced into their respective dominions.

To obtain this laudable end, some kings of France invited successively many of the most celebrated artists and men of letters from Florence and other parts of Tuscany, and encouraged them with such liberality, that in a little time they were able to produce a very remarkable change
in

in the manners of that nation, till then addicted to almost nothing else but barbarous gallantry and the destructive art of war. Nor was it long before the lively French rivalled their ultramontane masters in many things; nay, they improved so fast, and attained so quickly to that civility and elegance which always follow close on the steps of arts and literature, that French politeness soon became a kind of universal pattern, upon which all other European nations ever after condescended to model themselves. Thus Tuscany was the mistress of politeness to France, as France has since been to all the western world; and this little province may justly boast of having produced (and nearly at one time) a greater number of extraordinary men than perhaps any of the most extensive European kingdoms.

The good effects caused in Tuscany by that diligent cultivation of arts and literature continue to this present time. It is true that the Tuscans are inferiour to
their

their forefathers in many respects, and particularly in the polite arts : but where is the modern nation whose artists can claim any equality with the Michelangelo's, Lionardo's, Donatello's, Cellini's, and other ingenious men of that happy age? Yet the Tuscans are still possessed of as much skill and taste in those arts as any other modern nation ; witness the uniform accounts given by almost all travellers of their elegance in their buildings, furniture, and general manner of living ; and witness the many Tuscan artists found in almost all the capital towns of Europe, of whom London does not want a tolerable share : and as to academical accomplishments, those who have taken the trouble of reading the works of Gori, Cocchi, Lami, Perelli, and other modern Tuscans, will certainly allow, that the inhabitants of their metropolis are justly intitled to as much honour as the learned of any town in Christendom of equal dimension,

mention, or an equal number of inhabitants.

Among the general characteristics of the Tuscans I have already touched upon their love of poetry, and, what is altogether singular in them, their common custom of *improvvisare*; that is, of singing verses extempore to the guitar and other stringed instruments.

Both these qualities in them are of a very ancient date. The Tuscans were smitten by the charms of poetry to a greater degree than any other people; as soon as their language began to be turned towards verse. One of our old novellists (Franco Sacchetti, if I remember well) says, that the common people of Florence used commonly to sing the poem of Dante about the streets, even during the life of that poet, whom we justly consider as our first writer of note. It appears besides, that the ancient odes, songs, and ballads collected by Lasca, and printed under the
title

Ottave alla Fiorentina

Intanto Erminia fra l'ombro-
se piante D'antica.

felva dal Cavallo è scor ta Nè più governa il

fren la man tremante E mezza quasi par trà viva e mortà.

Per tante sfrade si raggiira e tante
Il corridor che in sua balia la porta,
Che alfin dagli occhi altrui pur si dilegua
Ed e soverchio omai eh'altri la segua.

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title of *Canti Carnaschialeschi**, were for the greatest part composed by the lowest among the Tuscan people; that is, by carpenters, coopers, barbers, shoemakers, and other persons of this class.

With regard to their *improvvisare*, my English reader will not easily be made to conceive it as a thing, which requires great poetical powers; nor is it possible to give a just idea of it to a stranger. Yet I can aver, that it is a very great entertainment, and what cannot fail of exciting very great surprise, to hear two of their best improvvisatori, *et cantare pares et respondere parati*, and each eager to excel, expatiate in *ottava rima* upon any subject moderately susceptible of poetical amplification. Several times have I been

* The title of that collection runs thus: *Tutti i Trionfi, Carri, Mascherate, o Canti carnaschialeschi andati per Firenze dal tempo del magnifico Lorenzo de' Medici sino all' anno 1559*. In 8vo. It was reprinted at Florence in 1750, with the false date of *Cosmopoli*.

astonished

astonished at the rapidity of their expressions, the easiness of their rhymes, the justness of their numbers, the copiousness of their images, and the general warmth and impetuosity of their thoughts : and I have seen crowds of listeners hurried as well as myself into a vortex of delight, if I may so express it, whose motion acquired more and more violence as the bards grew more and more inflamed by the repeated shoutings of the bystanders, and by the force of that opposition which each encountered from his antagonist.

The origin of this custom among these people cannot be easily ascertained ; or, to speak with more propriety, I have endeavoured in vain to discover it in those days, when Italian poetry took up more of my time than it does at present. It is reported by the biographer of Luigi Pulci, that this poet, who flourished about the year 1450, used often to sing long canto's extempore at the table of Laurence De Medici's. It is even pretended

tended he put afterwards into writing many of those canto's by the advice and assistance of Laurence himself, of Argypolo, Politian Giambullari, Marsilius Ficinus, and other learned men, familiarly admitted to his suppers by that famous patron of learning; and that the *Morgante Maggiore* was thus formed; a long poem* of the epic kind, incoherent indeed, and full of extravagancies, and yet no less delightful than the *Furioso* itself.

That sensibility of heart which has long made the Tuscans thus enamoured with poetry, has likewise totally wore out that ferocity for which they were so remarkable in the brutal times of the Guelphs and the Gibelines; and has brought them to be perhaps the most gentle and amiable nation now extant. This character of gentleness is indeed easily to be perceived by any traveller as soon as from Bologna he reaches the

* Printed for the first time at Venice in 1494.

highest tops of the Apennine, where all strangers are treated with the softest urbanity by those mountaineers, who to the simplicity which is natural to all inhabitants of extensive ridges of hills, join the most obliging expressions and the most respectful manners. And a man needs be very peevish and ill-humoured, who is not satisfied with the rustic benevolence of the Tuscans, as he goes on descending from Pietrainala towards Florence, where the custom-house-fellows themselves treat him with the greatest civility, asking the usual questions with their hats off, visiting his baggage without throwing it topsy turvy, and modestly thanking him for any small coin slipped into their hands as a reward for their discretion.

I cannot say much of the Florentine nobility, as I was not long in their town. The few, that I have known there and in other places, seemed to me quite as airy and vivacious as the French, and aiming at wit as much as they could. The
people

people of the second rank throughout Tuscany have the reputation of being much inclined to jesting and sarcasm ; censorious in their conversation, and epicureans at their tables, though great observers of economy : and a traveller may easily see by the whole face of the country, that the Tuscan peasants have made no inconsiderable progress in agriculture.

C H A P. XXIX.

I Have little more to add to what has been said in the foregoing six chapters with regard to those characteristical marks that distinguish one Italian nation from another. The Neapolitans I shall not venture to describe, though they are the most numerous nation of Italy, because I have not visited any part of their country. Having formerly bestowed some study on their dialect, and had an opportunity of making some observations on several Neapolitans whom I have met with in different places, I might possibly be in a condition to form some slight judgment of their manners. But these and other such helps cannot prove quite sufficient. Therefore I think it will be the wisest part to pass them over in silence, and refer my reader to Mr. Sharp's book, by which it appears that at Naples the nobility have

scarce any sense, wit, virtue, or money left; that the gentry feed upon stewed cabbage for the sake of keeping a coach; and that the lower people are nothing else but a hateful gang of idle, superstitious, and bloody villains.

C H A P. XXX.

I Have already said, that one of the greatest difficulties a stranger travelling through Italy has to encounter, is the remarkable difference between the dialects of its several provinces. A man may traverse all England without suffering any inconvenience on this account, because England is so constituted, that a large number of its inhabitants are perpetually changing place, and shifting from all parts of the country to the metropolis, or from the metropolis to all parts of the country. These incessant migrations, besides several other causes, bring all the English to speak nearly after the same manner, as their chief dialect becomes daily more in use, and is continually spreading. A stranger therefore who intends to travel over this kingdom, needs
but

but to learn the speech of the metropolis, and he may be sure that he never shall want language in his tour. But in Italy the case is very different. The people of one state seldom travel into another; so that their dialects undergo no material alteration, and are preserved in what may be called their barbarous purity. It is true that all the Italians endeavour to write in the language of Tuscany; and throughout the whole peninsula the sermons run in the same language likewise. Yet these two practices do not greatly contribute towards spreading the Tuscan language, because in their daily intercourse all Italians use the speech of their own narrow districts, and never trouble their heads with the language of Tuscany but when they converse with strangers. Nay, when an Italian speaks that language, though he generally makes use of Tuscan words, yet he still retains his native pronunciation, and, what is still worse, his native phraseology. Even at

the courts of our several sovereigns, and in our halls of judicature, every body follows this method; and should any Italian, but a Tuscan, aspire in his common discourse to Tuscan purity, he would be laughed at, as guilty of a ridiculous affectation. All Italians born out of Tuscany think the Tuscan language should be confined to mere writing and the pulpit. Hence it follows that a Bergamasco, for instance, may speak to another Bergamasco in Naples, or a Genoese to another Genoese in Venice, and be understood by a Neapolitan or Venetian not much more than if they spoke Arabic. And yet all our various dialects are nothing else but inflections and modifications of the same language; nor are there many words in our dialects which cannot be derived from the Tuscan; nay, those few are considered in each respective place as mere transitory cant.

This difficulty of understanding each other amongst the Italians, instead of lessening

sening by lapse of time and by the annual encrease of books, rather augments every day, because every day there are people in all parts of Italy, who, out of affection to their native dialects, write in them many compositions in verse. This affection is so common and so strong, that it has procured us four intire translations of Tasso's *Jerusalem* into as many of our dialects; that is, into Venetian, Neapolitan, Bergamasco, and Bolognese; besides a fifth in Milanese, made by one Domenico Balestieri, which he read to me in manuscript. We have likewise a considerable number of comedies and farces written in more than twenty of our dialects, which are often acted in schools and colleges by young students in carnival-time, and in summer and autumn by gentlemen and ladies in the theatres they have at their country-houses.

From this account the reader will easily see how difficult it must prove for any stranger to give any perfectly good account
of

of Italy, and how absurd and ridiculous those travellers are, who speak of the Italians without any discrimination, attributing one general character to them all. How can any body be persuaded, that people who differ so much in speech as scarcely to understand each other, have their customs and manners in common ?

C H A P. XXXI.

IN perusing the books of travellers we are naturally led to desire and expect some account of the domestic life of the people whom the author has visited; but few of them are possessed of the first and most indispensable requisite towards the performance of this task, as few of them are acquainted with the necessary tongues; and he who has not a competent knowledge of the language of the country he visits, cannot easily be admitted by the natives to that familiarity of intercourse which might afford him sufficient opportunities for making remarks on their private life. Yet it is this familiar intercourse alone, that can enable him to give an exact description of the occupations and amusements of that domestic life,
from

from which we are to form a just idea of them.

But though ignorance of the language is, amongst other causes, a great obstacle to a travel-writer in giving a just delineation of the common life and common diversions of the nations he visits, yet we must not hastily conclude that the same will, on the other hand, prove easy to an individual of those nations themselves. A native will likewise find many difficulties in his way when he attempts to give foreigners an idea of his countrymen, because, being familiarized to all their peculiarities, he will not be able to distinguish those that will interest more than others the curiosity of a foreigner; besides that many of them will appear to him not worthy of remark; and their number may also be so great, as to make it impossible for him to commit them all to writing without risking the charge of being tedious: so that the bare selecting such particulars as may best answer his purpose
and

and satisfy curiosity, must certainly require no small skill in the choice, and no vulgar method in the narration.

Of these difficulties I am so sensible, that I must previously enter a protest to my English reader, and plainly tell him, that he is not to expect from me any satisfactory detail upon this particular. I will indeed endeavour in a few of the following pages to put together some little facts, in order to assist his imagination in forming an idea of the manner in which life is commonly spent amongst us. But, should chance direct me chiefly toward trifles and follies, I hope he will readily grant me his pardon, if he considers that I am here attempting to describe that, which, all the world over, is generally spent in follies and trifles; and, what is still worse, is not only so spent by the vulgar, but, alas! by the very deepest thinkers and most supercilious philosophers.

Amongst the highest ranks of mankind, as well as amongst those who pretend to
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be much conversant with books and philosophy, there are in all Christian countries many, who profess to be deists and atheists; and of these I have reason for saying that there are some in almost all our cities and towns. But as their number is not very considerable when compared to the bulk of the nation, and as most of them conform in outward appearance to the national mode of religion, I do not think it necessary to take any particular notice of them here, and point out the attempts that a few of them have made of late to spread their absurd notions through the country by means of the press. Our atheists and deists, of whom several travel-writers have made some mention, form no distinct body amongst us, any more than amongst other European nations: therefore I shall here sink them into the mass of that plurality which keeps steady to the tenets long embraced by their predecessors, and likely to be transmitted to their latest posterity.

This

This little preamble naturally leads me to observe, that when a true Italian awakes in the morning, the first action he performs is that of crossing himself and saying his prayers kneeling by his bed-side.

These prayers consist for the most part in a *pater noster*, an *ave maria*, and an *angele dei*, with the addition of the ten commandments of God, and the five of the church.

As we are all brought up in the habit of saying these things by our mothers and nurses, who make it a point every morning to repeat them loudly in our ears even before we can speak, it may easily be believed, that there are few amongst us who get rid of this habit when infancy is over, as we are farther confirmed in it for several years by our masters at school and by our catechists at church, who are incessantly recommending and inculcating to young people the indispensable necessity of this duty.

Breakfast

Breakfast is with us different according to the age and condition of people. Young folks are seldom or never permitted to drink any thing hot in a morning, as is customary in England. They breakfast upon dry bread, or bread and cheese, or bread and fruit, such as the season affords; and are not permitted to taste coffee and chocolate, which are used for breakfast by all our polite people of an adult age. A notion is universal amongst us, that any thing hot in a morning spoils the teeth of young persons, and enfeebles their constitution.

As to the generality of our peasants and lower sort of people, they breakfast on *polenta*, which is a sort of pudding made with the flower of turkey-corn, on which while it is hot they spread some fresh butter, with the addition of some walnuts or a slice of cheese, if they can afford it. As for tea, our low people are still unacquainted with it. Our ladies used formerly to drink a small basin of it
when

when troubled with a cold: but in my late tour through several parts of Italy I have had occasion to observe, that it comes into fashion pretty fast, especially in our maritime towns: and several of our patriots have told me, with much political sorrow, that the vanity of imitating *le miledi d'Inghilterra*, was beginning to spoil our best signora's, and greatly increased the importation of this useless and costly drug.

The Italians are in general very early risers, especially in summer. A great many of them who have no country-houses in which to spend that season, go very often at sun-rise with their whole family to breakfast in the fields at some distance from the towns. There they carry cold meat, sausages, cheese, fruit, and wine, spread a napkin on the grass near some brook or spring, and make a most chearful meal: then, before the sun grows hot, get back home to attend their

business ; and this morning exercise they think very wholesome and very necessary, especially to children. This custom however only prevails among the middle sort, and does not extend to the higher rank of people, who live in Italy pretty much after the manner of their equals in other civilized countries, and always breakfast at home, except sometimes for a frolic when they are at their country-houses.

In the Sardinian dominions, from the king down to the meanest artist, every body goes to his dinner at twelve o'clock : but in all other parts of Italy they dine two or three hours later. The place of distinction at table is the seat at the greatest distance from the door at which the victuals are brought in ; and this post is generally assigned to the oldest woman in company, or to an invited guest. All the rest take up their places, men and women promiscuously. The trouble of carving is not left to the ladies, as in England.

England. At common tables the men carve; and at great tables there is generally a servant out of livery, whose only business is to carve for the company. A common dinner begins with what is called in England a French soup, and still oftener with a *mêlée* either of rice, of macaroni's, or of legumes: then follow the boiled meats; then the roasted; and last the cheese and fruit: nor is it customary ever to dine but in this order. As to our rich people, they have their French cooks as in England; and their dinners are nearly such as those of all the rich throughout Europe.

Our women in general drink mostly water at their meals: but our men drink two or three large glasses of wine: and no health is drank to any body, present or absent, except a foreigner is invited. In this case we drink healths once or twice, in compliance with an outlandish custom, of which we are all apprised; and use it

likewise at nuptial dinners in favour of the married couple.

As soon as dinner is over, every thing on the table is removed to make room, first for liquors, of which we have several sorts of our own making, and then for coffee, which is brought when the servants have dined. In those parts of Italy where the winter is very cold, fire is kept under the table while dinner lasts: and I remember the time when it was very common to have water in summer for every guest to keep his naked feet in, while dinner lasted: but this custom is at present almost totally disused.

In summer, almost every body after dinner goes to sleep for an hour or two, either on an easy chair or a bed. For this reason we seldom dress before dinner, as they do in England; but eat in our banyans and morning-gowns: and if we have dressed after breakfast, in order to go out, we undress, on purpose to be
more

more easy at table : and here I must say again, that this custom does not extend to our nobility and better sort of people, who have long adopted the custom of going to their dinner in full dress ; which puts them to the inconvenience of dressing again when they do not abstain from sleeping after dinner.

In summer, when the sun begins to decline, few people care to stay at home ; but every one that can, women as well as men, go to walk till night, as many in company as possible for the convenience of chatting ; and always where the great people resort in their coaches : and this walking backwards and forwards usually lasts till half an hour or an hour after sun-set.

When the walk is over we go to supper, which always begins with some sort of salad and ends with fruit. After supper we go out again to walk, except the nobility, who by this time have repaired

to some house where a *conversazione* is kept. Those that go out after supper, ramble about the streets, as many as can be got together, and enjoy the fresh air, listening to the singing and playing of those who divert themselves and others with either; and there are always a good many who do it in all our chief towns. Thus our streets in summer are more frequented in the night than in the day-time. This sort of diversion is generally enjoyed till midnight, and by many till one or two in the morning: then these parties break up, and people go home, repeat the same prayers they said in the morning, and go to bed.

Such is the usual tenour of life in Italy. There are few Italians that care for amusing themselves with any kind of play in summer: but in winter they beguile their cold and long evenings with cards, and in most parts of eastern Italy with chess, backgammon, tric-trac, and other such
 2 games.

games. Of these I shall not speak here, because they are known to the English as well as to us : but of those card-games that are only in use amongst us, I shall say something in another place.

An Italian one degree above the vulgar, never sits at table without having first refreshed his hands, especially in summer : and the water for this purpose is administered by a servant. Nor do we use water-glasses after our meals, as people do in England ; but if any body chuses to wash his hands or mouth, he leaves the table, and goes to another part of the room.

As for our food, I have not many singularities to note, except that few Italians can endure beef at their tables. Many English ministers residing at our courts, and many English gentlemen habituated in the country, finding the beef to their taste in several parts of Italy, have kindly endeavoured to bring it into fashion, and would persuade us to eat it roasted. Nay,

I remember a noble lord who had so much good-nature as to send for a butcher out of his own country, to teach the butchers of Turin the true way of cutting up an ox. Yet his endeavours proved vain, and he could not remove many from their foolish opinion that beef is gross food, only fit for the vulgar, to whom they leave it freely, using only some of the choicest parts for bouilli: and the vulgar themselves will not eat it roasted, but boil or stew it, or bake it into pies highly seasoned with pepper, garlick, onions, and other strong ingredients.

Salt-beef we dislike still more than roast-beef; and no salted meat of any kind is ever brought to our polite tables, except sausages and tongues. Our chief meat is veal; and though in some places it is eat young, yet in general it is not used until six or seven months old. We have also pork, that is reckoned excellent by foreigners as well as by us; and fowls
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of all sorts in abundance, both tame and wild. We often eat kid and lamb; but rarely mutton, because it is not very good throughout Italy, except that which comes from Savoy, Switzerland, and the higher parts of the Apennine. The low people eat the mutton that is bred in the flat parts of Italy; and if any body above the vulgar has a mind, for the sake of variety, to a leg or a shoulder of it, it is never eaten but roasted, and stuck all over with garlick, sage, and rosemary before it goes to the spit or the oven. Nor are large joints of meat served to our tables, except in large families that can consume them in a day, because in a country where the heat is considerable during many months, it cannot be customary to save victuals for to-morrow.

On meagre days, (the observation of which in my late visit to Italy I found fast declining) the sea, the lakes, the rivers, and the numerous artificial ponds, furnish
the

the greatest part of our towns with a great variety of fish, as the gardens and fields do of vegetables, which our cooks know how to dress in several and very palatable ways by the helps of butter, cheese, spices, anchovies, capers, and other ingredients, and especially mushrooms and truffles, which many provinces of Italy afford in abundance, and of the most delicate kind. We eat besides great quantities of dry and salt fish, which we get from abroad, and dress it in many ways not known in England, as far as my observations have gone.

We have not yet the use of potatoes. An English consul in Venice cultivates them with good success in his fine garden nor far from Mestre, a place about five miles from Venice: but few of his Italian guests will touch them. Such is the repugnance that the generality of mankind have for eating what they have not been early accustomed to eat, that an English captain who brought to Naples a large cargo

cargo of potatoes during the late famine, was obliged to throw them overboard, as he could not even find people willing to take them for nothing. And yet we have several little nations, if I may so call them, along the ridge of the Apennines, who eat almost nothing else through a good part of the year but chesnuts, of which they make even bread; and many poor peasants in other parts, who eat almost nothing else but *polenta* instead of wheat-bread.

When the Italians have taken their afternoon naps in summer, their servants attend with lemonade, orgeate, sherbet, and other cooling drinks that have been kept in ice. They drink plentifully of them not only then, but almost every hour of the day: nor do they ever want this refreshment, because great quantities of ice and snow are preserved all over Italy for the hotter months. Should there ever be a scarcity of it any where, which happens but seldom, and in very few places,

places, people would lament it near as much as a famine : and at Venice, where it would be very difficult to have ice-houses under ground because of the water, ice is brought every summer-night from the continent ; and there are laws by which the people who keep coffee-houses are obliged to provide the town with so necessary a thing, as it would greatly distress the labouring people, if they could not cool their wine at meals, and quench their thirst many times a day with frozen water.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXII.

I ought to be a painter rather than a writer, in order to give a clear idea of the variety of dresses used in the several parts of Italy. However this variety appears more in the habits of the women than of the men; and that, of the women too of the lower rank. The men throughout Italy dress as in most parts of Europe, except the nobles of Venice and Genoa, whose habits are peculiar to themselves, and to those few amongst their subjects in each town, who have the privilege of dressing like them.

The winter-dress of a Venetian noble, consists of a long woolen black gown bordered with ermine, which he ties about his middle with a silver clasp: this gown has large hanging sleeves. He wears likewise an enormous wig; but no hat or cap,
 though

though formerly a black cap was part of his dress. His summer-dress is likewise black, open, loose, and shorter than that of the winter, with a silk-coat under it made after an old fashion somewhat resembling what is called a Vandyke-dress. The peculiar dress of his lady is also old-fashioned, and made of black velvet.

The nobleman of Genoa dresses also in black, but after the modern manner, with a narrow silk cloak hanging down his back; nor is his wig so large as the Venetian's. He wears a plain hat, generally under his arm. His lady dresses often in colours; but her dress of ceremony is black silk or black velvet, according to the season.

At Venice the inhabitants in general wear large grey cloaks, in summer of silk, and in winter of black silk lined with white plush, over their ordinary dress. The cloaks of the lower sort are stuffs of any colour. Such at least was the fashion of cloaks when

when I was there last: but the Venetians do not stick long to a fashion in point of cloaks. I remember the time when they were all of scarlet-cloth, and afterwards of fine camblet.

At Rome the better sort of people, and even married men, dress for the greater part like abbots: and these are all the deviations from the common fashion that I have observed in Italy amongst men: but with regard to women, it is not easy to describe their peculiar fashions in different places, and give an idea of the Genoese *méséro*, and the divers sorts of *zendado's*, or head-dresses and veils used in other parts when they intend to be full-dressed. In some parts the women cover only their heads; in some their heads and shoulders; in some the whole upper part of their body; and some the whole body from head to foot: and there are places, where women cover their gowns from the waste down with a black petticoat, as if they wanted

wanted to conceal the richness or the prettyness of their dress.

Gentlemen throughout Italy in the hot months dress in the thinnest silks, and use velvet in winter, besides cloth of all sorts and colours, much laced or embroidered if they can afford it; for they love finery as well as the French. In winter likewise they line their coats with costly furs; wear large muffs; and in many parts adorn their hats with feathers when they are young. The men wear swords all over Italy, except at Venice, where the narrowness of the streets and the gondola's would make it very inconvenient. Even strangers at Venice leave their swords at home, and put on a cloak.

The poorest peasants in many parts of Italy, wear neither hat, cap, cravat, stockings, nor shoes; nay in some of the southernmost provinces they are satisfied with a gross unbuttoned shirt and trowsers in summer, and a very ordinary coat in winter,

winter, but still barelegged. Yet it is observable, that upon the whole they are much more large-bodied and better made than the Piedmontese, Lombards, and Venetians, who cloath themselves much better. The Apulians and Calabrese especially, are spoken of as the finest race of men in Europe, taking the word *fine* in the sense of painters, and not of young ladies.

With regard to our habitations, there are perhaps more stately houses in Italy than in France and England taken together. Nevertheless I am of opinion that we are not lodged so comfortably as the English, nor are our houses furnished with so much taste, or abounding with so many conveniencies as theirs. It is true that we have in Italy some immense estates; but upon the whole the wealth of our nobility and gentry is not at all proportioned to their number, which is certainly too great. And I am not sure, whether our having a great many people

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of a high rank in life, determined by their birth and not by their fortunes, may not prevent the diffusion of a general taste for elegance and convenience through our country: for it happens in such circumstances, that if a suitable figure be kept up in one part of life, it must often be purchased by the sacrifice of something in another part; and the whole cannot be comfortably and reputably filled up so, as to furnish an uniform style of accomodation.

This general situation has so much influence, even in cases which do not strictly come within this observation, that an English gentleman, put upon a par with a gentleman in Italy in point of income (due allowance made for the price of things in each country) will live much better than the Italian: the furniture of his house will cost him as much as an Italian; so will his coach, the trappings of his horses, and all other things: but still he will have every thing more neatly done, more genteel, and much better contrived for use.

Here

Here an Englishman perhaps will observe, that the abundance of conveniencies in England arises from the superiority of the English over the Italians in point of riches, as well as from their greater knowledge of life, and acquaintance with politeness. But I am not intirely of this opinion; and though I allow the English workmen to be generally better than ours, yet I will venture to assert, that the difference between the riches of the two nations is far from being so great as is fancied by many people in England, and even in Italy, where the notion prevails that the English are beyond all comparison richer than the Italians.

To attempt a proof of my assertion would require a very long discussion, and lead me too far. But to cut the matter as short as possible, let any body enquire into the incomes of our several governments, and he will find that the sum total is not very short

of the income of this nation, taken upon an average from the last year of the late war.

I am sensible that the greatest part of my readers, instead of giving themselves this trouble, will laugh at me for offering so much upon this subject; those in particular, who know no more of Italy than what has been said in print by several of their travellers; and chiefly by Mr. Sharp, who has spoken so wisely and so diffusely of the *poverty*, the *wretchedness*, the *unhappiness*, the *miserable state*, and the *deplorable condition* of the Italians. But this is to rail and declaim, and not to reason. I know that any body who has eyes, and will make use of them, may see every where in Italy fine houses, fine coaches, fine horses, and fine liveries: I know that there are a number of gentlemen richly dressed, and of ladies sparkling with gold and jewels: I know that many nations of Italy, especially in the northern and western parts, are so far from being rigid economists, that strangers in

general charge them with epicureism, because they will have even a disgusting variety of dishes on their tables. I know that our numerous sea-ports are full of shipping: I know that almost all our towns have large and fine theatres, all much frequented; and many temples even superiour to the most famous of ancient Greece and Rome: I know that our public shows are in many places very costly, and some much finer than that of an English Lord Mayor's. I know that when a foreign king, queen, or great prince comes to Italy, they meet in some parts of it with grander entertainments than any where in Europe: I know besides, that Italy is not only fertile, but that it produces upon the whole more rich commodities than any other country in Europe of equal extent; and I know in fine that the ballance of commerce upon a general average is greatly in its favour. And knowing all this, in consequence of the many careful observations that I have made there

for a considerable space of time, and of the many informations I have procured, how is it possible to help a movement of contempt or pity against such as having perused no other writer upon Italy than Mr. Sharp, borrow all their notions from him, and form a judgement of that country upon his misrepresentations?

It is true on the other hand, that, besides many disadvantages we have when compared to the English, many spots in our country are little less than barren, or not cultivated as they might be. But are all tracts of lands, so large as Italy, quite fertile, or quite well cultivated any where in the world? I am sure this is not the case of Great Britain, where even in the southern parts I have seen vast tracts of desert; and in the northern I am told, that a very great proportion of the country is quite wild and barren.

It is likewise true, that there are in our churches many silver-lamps and silver-candle-

defticks, which, according to Mr. Sharp, it were better to fend to the mint, and thus enlarge our commerce. But these fages who advife all nations to throw their ufelefs filver into the great ocean of commerce, why do they not fend to the mint thofe many filver baubles that adorn their fide-boards? Yet Mr. Sharp's notion is miferable and childifh; for it is by quite different methods that commerce is fupported and flourifhes.

But if Italy is near fo rich as England, how does it happen, that the Englifh nation is fo renowned all over the world for its power, which is the natural confequence of its riches, and how does it happen, that the Italian makes no figure at all either in Europe or any where elfe?

To this question I cannot give any answer, until I fee all Italy, or even the greater part of it, under a fingle government, either free or flavifh, no matter which; and until then, Mr. Sharp is very

welcome to call the few frigates and gallies of the Pope and the king of Naples *Liliputian fleets*; to say say that the king of Sardinia *sells the grass that is cut in one of his gardens*, though the grass-plots there are not altogether as large as South-Audley-Square; and a thousand such other imperinencies no less nauseous to read than to relate.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXIII.

THE man would certainly appear extraordinary, if not ridiculous, who should attempt to appreciate the different degrees of mental power possessed by the chief European nations, when considered as bodies opposed to bodies, and endeavour to form his estimate, either by drawing inferences from those portions of wit that they must necessarily employ when they play at their national games of cards, and from those resources of genius that must have been possessed by those amongst their respective predecessors, who first invented those games.

Forbearing therefore to enter into this subtle and odd disquisition, I will only observe, that it is not without reason the English are proud of their *whist*, the
French

French of their *piquet*, and the Spaniards of their *ombre* *, which, as I take it, are the three best games of cards amongst the several that their nations possess. To obtain a victory or to hinder a defeat at any of these games, requires so much quickness and dexterity of mind, that I do not wonder if even men of good parts are flattered when they are praised for this accomplishment.

Which of these three games required the greater effort in the invention, or demands most skill in the management, I will not take upon me to determine: but I think myself well intitled to say, that three or four of our Italian games of cards are almost as superiour in both respects to whist, to piquet, and to ombre, as chess is superiour to polish-drafts. The games I mean, are those which we form out of

* It ought to be spelled *hambre*, which in Spanish signifies a *man*.

those cards called *Minchiate* and *Tarrocco's*: the first chiefly in vogue all over Tuscany and the Pope's dominions; the second in Piedmont and Lombardy. I crave the reader's indulgence for endeavouring to give him some idea of both these games, just to make him sensible, that the Italians, who have often appeared great in the arts considered by mankind as great, are likewise great in those that mankind will regard as little.

Both the *minchiate* and the *tarrocco's* consist of five suits instead of four, as common cards do. Four of those five suits answer exactly to the four of the common cards, with only the addition of one card to the three that are figured in each suit; so that, instead of king, queen, and knave, we have king, queen, horseman, and knave, both in the *minchiate* and the *tarrocco's*. As to the fifth suit, it consists of forty-one cards in the *minchiate*, and of twenty-two in the *tarrocco's*;
and

and this fifth suit in both games is called by a name that answers to *trumps* in English. Both games may be played by only two, or only three people in several ways; but the most ingenious as well as the most in use, are two or three games that are played by four people; and more especially one which is played by one against three, much after the ruling principle of ombre, and another played two against two, not unlike whist.

By this account the reader will soon comprehend, that each of those games must necessarily be much superiour to whist and ombre, because of the greater number of combinations produced either by the ninety-seven cards of the minchiate, or by the seventy-eight of tarrocco; which combinations cannot but give a larger scope to the imagination of the player than the lesser number arising from the forty of ombre, or the fifty-two of whist, and oblige him to exert his memory and judgment

judgment much more than either at whist, ombre, or piquet.

I have heard strangers, unable to comprehend any of these our games, object both to the tarrocco's and the minchiate, that they cannot be so diverting as the three mentioned, because they produce so many combinations as must prove too fatiguing. But if this argument carries conviction, we must of course conclude, that chess is less delightful than loo, because it forces the mind to a greater recollection of its powers than loo. This reasoning is certainly just with regard to little and sluggish minds; but will not hold with respect to those that are lively and comprehensive. However, those Italians, whose minds are much too contracted and disproportioned to the tarrocco's and the minchiate, or those who do not chuse to exert thir talents too much, have still the means of diverting themselves with several other games at cards.

that

that require no greater compass of imagination, memory and understanding, than whist, piquet, and ombre : and other still, that are upon a pretty equal footing with humble loo itself.

Let me add an observation more upon this subject. Many strangers are surprised that the Italians learn their games easily, and in a very little time play at them with as much skill as the best players among themselves. Hence they infer very kindly, that Italy abounds in gamblers more than their own respective countries. But is this inference very logical ? I apprehend they would say better, if they would be pleased to say, that the Italians, accustomed to more complicated games, can easily descend to play those, which, comparatively speaking, require less wit and less attention.

N. B. I have not wrote this short chapter for the perusal of those who make it a point to condemn all frivolous amusements,

and look upon themselves with great reverence because they always detested gaming. I intend it only for those connoisseurs in ingenuity, who know that cards have not only the power of rescuing the ordinary part of mankind from the torpid encroachments of dulness, but of affording also an efficacious refreshment even to the thinker, after a long run of deep meditation.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXXIV.

THE Italians are no great hunters on horseback, and have not the custom of running after the fox, as many people do in England. Perhaps our winters are too cold and our summers too hot for such pastimes, or perhaps our plains are too narrow, our mountains too high and rugged, and our rivers too rapid and frequent for this diversion. Yet several of our sovereigns have their hunting seats, and follow sometimes the violent exercise of pursuing the stag and the wild bear, and even the wolf. But this is no part of our national character, and in general we do not love such dangerous exercises. We are fonder of fowling and laying snares for the feathered kind; and as to the arts of catching birds, there is perhaps no nation in Europe so dexterous as the Italians, who,

who, among other inventions for this purpose, have that of the *Róccolo*, a short account of which I hope will not prove unacceptable.

A *Róccolo* is a circular spot of ground, generally on an eminence, and at some distance from any wood. This spot is planted with middle-sized trees in a circular disposition. The diameter of the circle about thirty or forty feet. These trees, which must not be very bushy, are covered on one side with a net that is left upon them as long as the sporting-time lasts. The area within the circle is likewise planted with trees much lower than the hedge round, and has in its center a green and bushy hut that contains many cages full of thrushes, finches, and such kind of small birds. A yard or two from those cages an owl is placed, that has been long used before-hand to eat his food perching on a short pole, the upper extremity of which is formed into a kind of small cushion, stuffed with rags or straw.

On one side of the circular hedge a tower is built about twenty feet high, the brickwork of which is well concealed by the branches and leaves of vines, ivy, and other creeping plants.

At the season in which birds are on their passage to other countries and regions, the *Roccolista*; that is, the man who owns a *Róccolo*, ascends the tower from within by a stair-case or a ladder two or three hours before the rising of the sun. At the top of the tower there is a small room for him to stand; and from the window there, he keeps a good look-out towards that part of the horizon from which the birds come. As soon as he spies or hears any, he gives a pull to a long string that he has fastened before to the leg of the owl in the green hut below. The owl thus suddenly pulled, falls to the ground from the pole or cushion on which he was resting, but presently hops upon it again. However the moment he falls he is perceived
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by the birds in the cage, who give a sudden cry ; and, sportsmen say they do it for joy, pretending that all birds rejoice at the sight of the owl. The cry is heard by the birds in the air ; and as many as there are, they all plunge precipitately in the Róccolo, as if wanting to see what is the matter. The Roccolista, who knows what will be the consequence of the cry made by his little prisoners in the cages, stands ready with many short pieces of wood by his side, to fling them at the flying birds. These pieces of wood, by the help of some wicker-work on two sides, grossly resemble a kite when on the wing. As soon as the birds are near a-ground within the area, without giving them time to light on the green hut, or the branches and bushes there, he throws as quick as he can several of his false kites over their heads, and thus frightens the poor things ; who endeavouring to escape the mock enemy through the circular trees, run di-

rectly into the net that covers them; and thus they are caught in great numbers every morning, sometimes even a thousand and more, if their passage is numerous and the Róccolo in a favourable situation for such a passage: nor does the Roccolista descend from the tower until the air grows so hot as to restrain the birds from their flight, and force them to seek for shelter. The least noise in a Róccolo would make the birds keep at a great distance; therefore the Roccolista keeps there quite still and silent, only whistling from time to time through several tin-whistles hanging at his neck, by means of which he mimics with great exactness the chirping of several birds. All birds lie very still when they feel themselves entangled in a net, except the kite, who is often caught himself in a Róccolo when too eager in pursuing the small birds. A kite, as soon as fallen in, squeaks as loud as he can: but there is
always

always a man attending the *Roccolista*, who keeps silently below the tower, ready to run and wring the neck of the noisy kite.

This sort of bird-catching is much followed all over Lombardy and in the Venetian territories: but I cannot say whether it is common or not in other parts of Italy. I only know that in Piedmont it is not at all practised, though the country abounds in several places with small birds of every kind.

Besides the *Róccolo* and the common way of laying nets, or the going about a shooting with a fowling-piece, we have divers other ways of catching birds. One, which I may possibly call peculiar to us, is that used on those of our lakes which abound with birds of the web-footed kind. There in the proper season a hundred light boats, or more if the width of the lake requires it, are provided. Each of these boats, besides the rower,

contains a sportsman, who has by his side a number of hand-guns ready loaded. The boats start all at once in a line from one side of the lake, and make towards the other where the game is flown at the sight of so many boats and people. As the boats approach, the frightened birds rise all in a cloud to a certain height, and fly towards the opposite side of the lake, whence the sportsmen started; and as they are passing over-head, each sportsman discharges his pieces at them as fast as he can, and makes many birds fall into the water, and often into the boats. As this sort of chase is no less noisy than pleasant, there are many ladies who partake of it, and prove very good sportswomen not at all afraid of a gun. When the sport is over, the dead fowls are collected and divided amongst the sportsmen.

On the laguna's about Venice they have likewise another very odd way of killing quantities of the palmipedous birds that
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are there in great plenty. Several empty and uncovered tubs are sunk in shallows within two or three inches of the brim, and placed at proper distance from each other. Many sportsmen, well provided with hand-guns ready loaded, and cartridges to load again in case of necessity, go in boats to those tubs before break of day; get into them, and send the boats away. As soon as the day-light approaches, the birds fly all about in search of their food. The sportsmen who stand peeping at the brim of their tubs, shoot at all those that come within reach. The sport lasts a good part of the morning; and when it is over, the boatmen come to fetch the sportsmen out of the tubs; row about collecting the dead floating birds; then all go merrily together to land, where the game is fairly divided.

I might describe not a few other methods used in Italy towards making prey

of all kind of birds, could I recollect any quite so singular as these already mentioned : and I might also take notice of our various ways of making war upon the inhabitants of the water, had I ever delighted in this other kind of sport. But though I have heard much to this purpose when I was young, yet a course of years and long absence have nearly defaced all my knowledge on such particulars.

C H A P. XXXV.

THE better sort of people among the Italians, like the people of the same rank in most modern nations, are not in general very fond of procuring themselves pleasure by means of violent exercise. However, it is otherwise with the common people; and the mentioning a few of their diversions which approach nearest to the ancient palestrical games, together with a succinct account of some barbarous pastimes which are in use in several parts of Italy, will possibly not be thought improper, as tending to give a little more complete idea of the manners of that country.

One of the most universal diversions among us, and which I believe peculiar to Italy, is that of the *Pallone*. A Pallone is a leather-ball filled with air, and about as big as a man's head. The number of those

those that play at the Pallone are generally twelve; that is, six against six. No man is reckoned a good player, who cannot throw the ball at least to a hundred yards distance at the first blow. They strike it with a wooden instrument called *Bracciale*, which with regard to its form, bears some resemblance to a muff, and is covered all over with short wooden spikes cut in the shape of a diamond.

Into this instrument the player introduces his hand and arm almost up to the elbow, and firmly grasps a peg fixed across in the inward part of the *Bracciale*. Thus armed, and lightly clad, and each player previously posted at a proper distance from each other, six against six as I said, they fall to it with great alertness, and strike the Pallone backwards and forwards with as much strength and dexterity as they can whenever it comes in their way, or run to it when it is at a distance, all endeavouring to make it ultimately fall far from themselves, and into the ground occupied

cupied by their antagonists; very much upon the plan of tennis-ball, supposing it played by many players.

This game, which cannot be played but in spacious places, and most conveniently by the side of some high wall or long range of buildings, is very common in summer, towards the latter part of the afternoon, in almost all our towns and villages: and it is usual all over Italy for the players of one place, to send challenges to those of another, (sometimes at the distance of a hundred miles and more) and invite them to try their skill at it for a stated sum of money: on which occasions especially, great crouds of people resort to see them play; nor are gentlemen and people of rank averse to be sometimes in the number of the players.

Anton-maria Salvini has given a full detail in print of another Italian game of the gymnastic kind, called *Calcio*, which is likewise played with *pallone*'s and *bracciale*'s by two numerous and parti-coloured bands

bands of antagonists. To Salvini's work I refer the reader for the gratification of his curiosity about this game, of which a sufficient idea may be formed by only casting a look on the plate prefixed by that learned man to his description; and I will only add, that this *Calcio* is peculiar to the Tuscans; nay, almost limited to the Florentines, who still exhibit it only on occasion of some extraordinary public rejoicing.

My curiosity carried me once in my youth to visit Scandiano *, the birth-place of Bojardo, who amongst our poets was, in my opinion, the most richly endowed with the rare gift of invention. There I

* A poor town in the duke of Modena's dominions, but a place of some consideration in Bojardo's time, as it was then the chief place of a small absolute sovereignty, descended to this poet by a long series of ancestors, who called themselves counts of Scandiano.

saw a game of so singular a kind, that I cannot pass it over unnoticed.

During the months of April and May, they have a custom there, and in many of the neighbouring places (as I was informed) to peel off the bark of a high poplar-tree, and strip it of all its branches in such a manner, as to make the trunk perfectly smooth.

When the tree is thus prepared, they hang on the top of it a certain quantity of hams, fowls, and other eatables, which are not to be got but by clambering up that trunk. The most vigorous amongst the unmarried peasants of the territory embrace the trunk courageously, and one at a time, as they are drawn by lot: and helping themselves by fastening a rope round the tree as they ascend, alternately tying and untying it, they endeavour to get at the desired premium. But the greatest part of them (some from a greater, some from a lesser height) are successively born down, and, for want of sufficient strength

strength and dexterity, slide down with great velocity to the ground, to the no small merriment of the numerous spectators of both sexes: and he who is so robust and skilful as to reach the top of the tree, and throw down the eatables, not only has them to himself, but instantly becomes so great a favourite with the pretty maidens round the country, that happy she whom he deigns to pay his addresses to, and desire in marriage.

I have likewise seen in some parts of Piedmont the young peasants stand erect in their carts drawn by oxen intoxicated with wine. The drunken animals, as it may well be imagined, run at a prodigious rate as soon as they are let loose, pricked, and frightened by the repeated shoutings and hideous clamour of a numerous rabble. The carts are often drawn out of the road, over uneven ground, and not seldom overturned into ditches and other hollow places, to the great danger of the fellows, that ride in them, who thus
madly

madly expose their limbs and life. Yet the vanity of appearing superior to one's neighbour, operates alike in the human heart, whether rustic or civilized; and the desire of acquiring distinction, as well as the certainty, in case of good success, of becoming considerable in the eyes of their sweethearts, makes the young peasants of Piedmont venture upon so perilous an exploit with the greatest intrepidity and alacrity.

In Piedmont likewise I have in my early days been many times a spectator of the *battajola*, as they call it; that is, of a battle which was then regularly fought on every holiday in the afternoon, between many of the inhabitants of one part of Turin against those of another part; the numbers of each side always increased by the country-people. The place of action was under the very walls of Turin, on the side of the river Po, which runs by it. There the parties,
which

which sometimes amounted to some thousands, flung stones at each other with slings during many hours with inexpressible heat and fury ; each party endeavouring to put the opposite to flight, and make prisoners, whom they shaved immediately when taken all over the head, and otherwise much insulted before they dismissed them. The battajola was usually begun by boys on both sides ; but ordinarily ended by grown men, who were gradually fired at the sight of the combat, and by the yielding of the boys on one side when overpowered by their opponents. Many were the heads broken on such occasions, and scarcely a holiday passed without some boy or man being killed. However, this ancient custom was at last abolished in a great measure when this present king was married to his third wife ; for it happened that the new queen, desirous of seeing the battajola, went with a great retinue to view it from the high wall of the gar-

den which belongs to the royal palace, chusing a place there that was thought out of the reach of a sling. Yet so it happened that one of the slingsmen had the insolence to sling a stone where she was, and one of her ladies was hit by it; which made the king resolve to put an end to this brutal diversion by a most rigid proclamation, and by sending soldiers to disperse the rabble as soon as they prepared to assemble; so that at present the battajola consists only of a few daring boys, who go to fight at a much greater distance of the town than they used to do before that accident happened.

Nor are these the only perilous diversions practised in Italy. Those who delight in viewing prints, may possibly recollect the having seen one done by a famous master, (I have now forgot his name) which is commonly called *Il ponte di Pisa* (*the bridge of Pisa*) as it represents a kind of battle that used often to be

fought on the bridge of that town by two parties, the combatants all clad in iron-armour, with iron-helmets on their heads, and furiously wielding heavy clubs in order to get possession of the bridge. Many in the scuffle had their heads and limbs broke, in spite of their helmets and armour, and many more were beaten or pushed head-long into the Arno beneath. It is true that those who thus fell, were immediately taken out of the water by the boatment posted in the river for this purpose : but as too many lives were lost every year at this terrible diversion, the government has in my time put a stop to it, and only a few boys are suffered sometimes to fight with their fists for the conquest of the bridge ; a thing which is also very customary in Venice. It is observable that in the print above mentioned, the combatants are represented naked, though in truth they fought completely armed.

In many parts of the Romagna and the Marca, the practice of bull-baiting is much followed; and in my late visit to Ancona, I saw a very showy kind of amphitheatre erected on purpose in the market-place for the exhibiting of this diversion in carnival-time, where numbers of spectators may conveniently sit and see the bulls, several of whom afford good sport to those who are pleased with such diversions, by tossing many Corsican dogs, which are reckoned the fiercest we have in Italy.

Nor are we totally without horse-races; though, to say the truth, such as are customary in divers of our towns, cannot but appear childish and ridiculous when compared to those of Newmarket, because our horses are every where, but in Asti*, made run without riders, and generally along one of the longest streets. Yet it is not unpleasant to see the spirit of our horses on such occasions, and with what emula-

* A town about twenty miles distant from Turin.

tion they strive to out-run each other, each appearing desirous to gain the prize for his owner ; which prize usually consists in a piece of velvet or scarlet cloth. At these races bets are often laid on this and that horse : yet never with that universal eagerness which is so observable at the English races.

But one of the most remarkable among our public diversions, is that of the *regatta* at Venice, where on particular days the gondoliers strive to out-row each other on their grand canal, or about the Laguna. When the town is visited by any royal personage, a regatta is commonly one of the pastimes given by the republic : and the emulous rowers are on such occasions accompanied from their starting-place to the end of their course by many barks magnificently equipped, representing the cars of Apollo, Venus, Neptune, and other deities, or some other showy and fanciful object : so that on such occasions Venice seems a town contrived by magic ; as many
English

English gentlemen said when they saw the regatta that was exhibited not many years ago to honour and divert one of their princes.

Many more are those of our public exercises, which require either dexterity, or strength, or both : but most of them have been described by travellers who have undertaken to write upon Italy ; and of these, many are neither interesting nor singular, as for instance, tennis-ball, pall-mall, or billiards ; and many are not known to me so well as to warrant a particular description. I shall therefore conclude this chapter with this single observation ; that Mr. Sharp, who professes to give a striking picture of Italian manners and customs, has almost intirely omitted to take notice of our pastimes and diversions, public as well as private ; and not said a single word about those Italian games and exercises that require great strength and great dexterity ; so that his book may easily betray his reader into the erroneous

belief that the whole Italian nation is utterly destitute of such exercises and games, and has almost no other public shows and public amusements, save those that are dependant on the superstitious practices of their religion, several of which he has described with a most invidious prolixity: and I leave it even to his admirers, if he has any, to judge whether his method is very proper to convey just ideas of any people, whose character for manliness or effeminacy depends in a good measure on forbearing or practising those games and exercises, which call necessarily forth the powers of the mind, as well as those of the body.

C H A P. XXXVI.

WHEN I first mentioned the morning prayers used by the Italians, I had some intention of giving an account of the manner in which the greatest part of them acquit themselves of those duties which are imposed upon them by their religion : but that thought slipped then in a manner through my fingers, and I went on talking about their breakfasts, their dinners, and other things, nor could recollect myself until I got a little too far from my mark. Let me do here what I ought to have have done in that place.

The Italians, like the English, are not very fond of going to church on working days : yet there are some persons, women especially, who will have their mass every morning, and their benediction every evening, particularly if there is a church

in their neighbourhood, where they may have both without any great inconvenience.

Many of my readers know very well what masses and benedictions are, or may easily know, either by asking their parson, or by only stepping into one of our popish chapels here in London at the proper hours ; therefore I shall spare myself the trouble of describing them : but going on with the thread of my story, I say that our churches, which are almost empty on working days, are generally full on holidays, particularly in the morning.

Every body has heard or read something of the churches of Italy ; how fine many of them are ; and how pompously adorned. On holidays, and before break of day, their bells are in motion, and the lower kind of people then hasten to hear the mass. As every church has, at least, three altars, and our priests and friars are many, so there are in all churches as many
masses

masses to be heard as one chuses, which are continued from the very first appearance of the morn till a little after noon.

About the middle of the morning the genteel people begin to make their appearance at church, the ladies attended by their servants and cicisbeo's, if they have any. A cicisbeo who goes to church with his lady, on their approach to the church-door, steps forward to hold up the curtain to her, and goes to the holy water, in which he dips the extremity of his middle finger, and offers it to her, that she may cross herself with it; which she does immediately, not forgetting to return thanks with half a curtesy.

We have no pews in our churches; but only benches or chairs, that are fit both for kneeling and sitting. In those churches where there are only chairs, their servants or the sexton reaches one to any lady or gentleman. But in those churches where there are only benches, a lady hastens
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where she sees a vacant place, or, if all the benches are occupied, where any man is placed. A man on the approach of a woman, though but tolerably dressed, and no matter her age, presently rises off the bench, and gives up his place to her. She kneels for a moment; crosses herself; mumbles a short prayer, (generally an *ave maria*); and if there is no mass ready at any of the altars, sits down till one begins. But if there is one just beginning, she continues kneeling until it is a little advanced; then sits; and kneels no more while it lasts, except when she hears the little bell that is rung when the priest elevates the host. Her kneeling at this time is accompanied with an air of recollection, and a very humble attitude.

When that mass is over to which she has turned her face, she still sits a while: then kneels again; mutters another *ave maria*, or any other short prayer; crosses herself; takes up the prayer-book in which she has been reading during the greatest part

part of the mass; gives it to her servant or cicisbeo; or puts it in her pocket; takes up her fan that was laid on the bench; crosses herself again; curtsies to the great altar; goes to the holy water, which when she has any gentleman in her company is given her, or takes it herself if she has none; crosses herself again; curtesies again to the great altar, as also to any body of her acquaintance whom she sees looking at her; and then walks out of the church if she has no farther business there; that is, if she does not go to the confessional, where good ladies make it generally a rule to go once a month.

With regard to the men, at church they generally stand, especially the young and gay; and only bend a little the right knee and incline the head at the elevation of the host: and what is still less exemplary, they whisper often in each other's ears, and point at the fair that come in and go out; for which they are upraided in due time by the lent-preachers, who tell them

them of the scandal they give by such a preposterous conduct, and of the great decency observed by Heretics and Turks in their acts of devotion.

Though our churches are many, as also the masses celebrated in them, yet some of them are wonderfully crouded on a holiday in the morning, because (contrary to what is done in England) no body abstains from going to church on a holiday, not even those who make nothing of religion, as it is one of the settled ways of filling up time. In all our great towns there are always two, three, or more churches, which we call *alla moda*, (*fashionable*), in which you are always sure towards noon to see the best company.

I have taken notice that the people in France are very fond of vespers in the afternoon: but my countrymen do not love vespers. They croud in the evening at the benediction, which is rendered a glorious sight by a vast illumination; by
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the solemnity of some short prayers sung before it ; and by the great concourse of ladies that resort to it. This last is an incitement not to be passed unnoticed, as the Italians never care for going to any place that is not visited by the sex. And our priests and friars know very well how to fill their churches with ladies by a benediction, giving them some piece of fine music, and contriving to have it when they return from their evening walk and haste to their supper, or *conversazione's*, or to the opera and the play. Priests and friars get something by thus filling a church, as they have always one or two fellows, who go about the church collecting alms and presenting a bag fastened at the end of a long pole to every body within the distance of it.

Some of our great people are but seldom seen at church, because they [have their chapels at home. This privilege they easily obtain from Rome by means of a small sum of money: and when they have

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a chapel,

a chapel, they soon find some poor priest who for a few pence will come to give them a mass any morning they chuse, and without putting them to the expence of a domestic chaplain.

This is the general manner of spending a holiday in Italy with respect to the religious duties that attend it: and I am pretty sure that my account of it will give my reader no great opinion of Italian devotion. However, let him not forget that those who strictly adhere to the rules of Christianity, are but few any where, and that every where there are also those who make it a point to perform all acts of religion with the greatest attention and sincerity. Whoever paints the manners of the plurality of any country, has at best but a poor picture to paint.

Italy, by superficial and prejudiced foreigners, is generally described as a land overflowing with the most absurd superstition: but though several of our religious rites and ceremonies may perhaps deserve
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this censure, yet I could almost wish that the better sort of my countrymen would turn a little superstitious, rather than behave with so much airiness and cavalieriness whenever they resort to a holy place.

There is no need of observing that this account regards only what is called the polite part of the nation. As to the low people and the peasantry, I have already said that they are in general strict followers of such modes of religion as are prescribed them by their ecclesiastical superiors; and the reader has already seen them preceding a Madona of wood or a Saint of pasteboard, devoutly singing with a wax-candle in their hands, and hanging votive pictures, silver hearts, and wooden limbs to the altars of those supposed inhabitants of heaven, by whom they fancy they have been assisted in their necessities, cured of their distempers, or delivered from some danger. Mr. Sharp insists, with great rage, that they are absolute idolaters

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for so doing ; but I am pretty sure that the poor simpletons mean well, and will not with their idolatry make heaven so very angry as they have made that gentleman.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXVII.

AFTER having said so much of the nature, manners, and customs of my countrymen, it will not be amiss to bestow a chapter or two on the land they inhabit, its climate, its productions, and its animals. But the reader has seen enough of my plan, not to suppose that I mean a regular piece of natural history. I mean only a view of Italy in such a light as corresponds with the rest of the design.

And first with regard to the climate, many of my English friends have often made me smile on a cold day, by asking whether we had any such cold in Italy? Indeed the winter is much more severe in our northern and western parts, than in London and the counties round it. In Turin, and Milan especially, and of course

in the intermediate country, I have seen many times the ground covered with a deep snow for two months together, and longer. Nothing is then to be seen in our streets but men wrapped up to the nose in their great coats, and women hiding their faces in their muffs. Our houses at this time have an additional casement on the outside of their windows, and thick curtains are hung at the doors of our churches. No verdure then of any sort. The naked trees are all made white by the frost. The smaller rivers and brooks full of ice, and some of them quite frozen. Not an insect is to be seen; and no birds, but clouds of sparrows and of crows. The whole land in fine is nothing then but a vast hoary desert, circled round by an immense chain of hoary mountains: and yet the people are never so chearful as during the continuance of this sort of weather: for then the towns abound more with diversions than in the better

better season. The rich amuse themselves with plays, opera's, assemblies, balls, concerts, mascarades, long dinners, and long suppers; while large distributions of food and drink at the gates of palaces and convents comfort the poor. And as to the country, the peasants croud in their stables with their cows and oxen, and there sing, dance, tell stories, work, and make love; regularly visited by their parsons, who go often to assist in eating the *polenta* *; and favoured likewise with the company of the elderly gentlewomen in their neighbourhood, who not seldom condescend to pass the evening with them, giving good advice to the maidens, and helping them to spin a distaff or two.

A thaw at last puts an end to this mixed scene of rigour and comfort, and in a few days the face of things is intirely changed. Spring advances with great rapidity in the

* I have already said, that the polenta is a kind of pudding made with the flower of turkey-corn.

Italian climate; and a vivid carpet is almost immediately spread over fields and meadows. The trees hasten to blossom: the feathered kind return from the sea-shores; and a new sort of delight is infused into every heart. By degrees the air grows hot. About the end of May it is intense. The corn is ready for the reaper in June and July; the mulberry-tree affords food to the silk-worm in August and September; and the grape is liberal of her juice in October and November. Such is the course of the seasons in the northern and western parts of Italy: I mean chiefly the inland parts in these quarters.

Let us now step over the rocks of the Ligurian hills and the cliffs of the Apennine, and let us see what is the condition of the inhabitants of the maritime shores. With them the winter is, in general, so mild, that they never lose the idea of verdure. The snow scarcely ever rests an hour on their ground. Their vines put on a new dress almost as soon as they have cast

cast off the old : all sort of fruit succeed each other with rapidity ; and their orange and lemon-trees never cease their alteration of leaves, flowers, and fruit.

The vast range of mountains which divides these countries, feels a winter of the most exquisite severity, and of a very long continuance. During many a winter the people are wholly confined to their huts and cottages, where they have plenty of nothing but of firing ; where they make hats of chips ; eat quantities of chesnuts, apples, dry peaches, cheese and polenta ; but seldom taste wheat-bread, meat, or fish ; and where they divert themselves as well as they can. In summer, to be sure, they are better off ; for then, with the assistance of vegetables and the birds they catch, they have a tolerable variety of food. Their general occupation in summer, is the pruning of their trees, the tending of their flocks ; enjoying the purer air and the most picturesque land-

scapes that can possibly be imagined. I have more than once crossed both the Alps and the Apennine, and chiefly in several of those places that look so awful and dismal at a distance; and was always delightfully surprised by some uncommon and diversified scene that almost at every step presented itself to my eyes. Many of their higher tops are thick-shaded with oaks, firs, and beech-trees, besides the numberless chesnut-trees that cover their sloping sides; and their vallies are so prodigiously fertile, and so romantically beautiful, that I often wondered how the whole nation could abstain from flocking there, at least as soon as the summer grants them a free passage.

Italy is a country of a diversity almost infinite in its climate; but, in general, (especially in the southern parts) the heat is beyond all comparison predominant. There it is indeed excessive for many days, and generally very troublesome to those
amongst

amongst the natives who want the means of refreshing themselves at home with bathing-tubs, or other such conveniencies. The rich can at will screen themselves from the greatest heat in Italy, as they can from the greatest cold in England: and this might have easily been guessed by Mr. Sharp, and kept him from exaggerating as he has done on this trifling subject. I am glad when I see him sitting in his elbow chair by a good fire, his amiable family round him, eating a chearful meal, and lovingly drinking each other's health. I often gaze with rapture on such delightful scenes in Mr. Sharp's country: but how can I forbear to pity him that never enjoyed the like in mine? and how can I be pleased when he has little more to say of me, but that I sit panting on the side of a room *in a callico-gown for hours together, wholly occupied in wiping off the sweat that runs in channels down my body?* Surely he has kept company with very fat

people in Italy, who generally hate summer, and has never entered the house of a slender Italian when he speaks in this strain, and describes our summer as so very disagreeable to us all. However I have no objection to his preferring the climate of England to that of Italy; nay, the last time I was on our side of the Alps I have oftentimes been of his opinion, especially when I was on a dusty road, or in a bad inn. But it is hard to settle the ballance of good and bad in climates. When I reflect that those who can have a constant good fire in winter are far from being the multitude in any country, and when I consider that the poor are better off in a hot than in a cold season all the world over; then my opinion staggers, and I always end my meditations with concluding, that that climate is more desirable where the winter is short, and of course the summer long, even though it should be something incommodious on
account

account of heat. But let us go on with our principal subject.

Those travellers who go to Italy by the way of France, generally enter it by the way of Piedmont, where Italy properly begins.

Piedmont is a large province, almost quite flat; and so well watered by the numberless rivers and brooks which flow down from the Alps, that few kingdoms can boast of any tract of land so fertile, and so variously productive as this. There you see numerous herds of cattle in rich pastures: vast fields that yield the best corn and the best hemp; and there are every where such plantations of mulberries, as, upon an average, annually produce near two millions sterling.

There is besides in Piedmont a fine breed of horses and of other animals; and the whole country is so well stored with trees of many kinds, as to furnish the inhabitants with timber for all their necessities

cessities, and with all the wood they want for firing.

The only thing produced by this province which is not universally excellent, though it is plentiful, is the wine: but the lower skirts of the neighbouring Alps, and the long chains of small hills, which surround it on many sides, furnish us with several kinds of the very best; though at first not much to the taste of those strangers who have been long accustomed to drink the wines of Portugal and France. And yet some sorts of wine in Piedmont have been within these few years brought to such perfection, as to be nearly mistaken, both by natives and strangers, some for Burgundy, some for Hermitage, and even some for Champaign. Nothing is more improved of late years than the management of vines in this province; and all sorts of fruit are also cultivated there with the greatest success; so that it is an observation I have heard made by strangers, that
the

the king of Sardinia may have, if he pleases, a better desert of fruit than any sovereign in Europe.

From Piedmont, without stopping in the province of Montferrat and some others, chiefly abounding in good wines and fine silks, we enter the Milanese : and of this tract of Italy I have little to say, but that it is full as fertile as Piedmont, and even exceeds it in some respects. And it is a pretty striking proof of its fertility, that, though it is but as large as Devonshire, or as Yorkshire at most, yet in the space of six years during the last war, the empress-queen drew from it forty - two millions of Milanese livres, (near a million and a half sterling) the whole fairly exported in specie into Germany ; and yet the Milanese have still lived on at the usual rate ; that is, very splendidly and profusely.

The states of Parma, Modena, and Mantua, and the territories of Bologna
and

and Ferrara, are little inferiour in point of fertility to the Milanese, and produce great quantities of corn, wine, silk, hemp, and cattle. The same is to be said of the provinces which the Venetians possess in Italy; so that from the Alps of Piedmont down to the Venetian Lagunes, an acre of land not cultivated is scarcely to be seen: and this fertility, as I said, is owing to the water flowing down from the Alps on one side, and from the Apennine, on the other; which waters are conducted wherever the inhabitants chuse, at no very great expence, and by means of many canals, some of which have been made large enough to answer the purposes of inland navigation as well as those of agriculture. Almost all the waters on the west and north of Italy, fall ultimately into the Po, and render it one of the most considerable rivers in Europe, extending itself more than three hundred and fifty miles from its source above Raconigi in Piedmont to the Adriatic.

But

But besides the great mountains which encompass these provinces almost on every side, and give them the appearance of an immense amphitheatre, there are hills of a moderate height which border each province. These hills are all so fruitful and pleasant, that our nobility have filled them with their villa's. The Piedmontese have what is called *La Collina*; that is, a ridge of low hills, which begins not far from Turin, and continues along the banks of the Po for about forty or fifty miles, all covered with houses and vineyards, except a few of the highest tops; and from all parts of this ridge you have extensive prospects, which are seldom or never enjoyed by strangers, because the towns and villages thick-scattered all over them, are not famed for pictures, statues, and carnival-diversions. The same may be said, as I have already hinted, of the *Mount-Brianza*, which terminates the Milanese on the side of Switzerland, and of the hills

in the neighbourhood of Bergamo, Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, and Padua, where you see on all parts, as on the *Mount-Brianza*, innumerable mills, turned by artificial streams, some for reeling silk, (like that which I have seen at Derby) some for grinding corn; some for sawing planks; some for manufacturing iron, cloth, paper, and other things. There it is, that foreigners, if they would take the trouble, might see what the Italians are; what their skill and ingenuity in arts and manufactures; and what their riches.

I have the more willingly mentioned these several ridges of hills, as I have but seldom or never met in the books of English travellers with any account, even short and imperfect, of those parts of northern and western Italy, which are, one may say, but a stone's throw from the great road of Rome. These gentlemen tell you of Turin, Milan, Brescia, Venice, and some other towns on that side, that
they

they are very well built towns, very populous, and very rich ; but they never tell by what means they are, and have been, maintained for so long a space of time in the state they describe them.

With regard to Tuscany, the Papal state beyond Bologna, and the kingdom of Naples, I have not so much to say, as of the Cispaline side of Italy; because, excepting a few parts of the Romagna and the Marca, it never was in my power to examine them so attentively, as to make me venture upon a description. However, one may collect from the several accounts of itinerary writers, that Tuscany is one of the most fruitful and best cultivated countries in Europe, and that it abounds with arts and manufactures as much as any province that can be named. That it is as most travellers have described it, the beauty of Florence, Pisa, Leghorn, Lucca, and several other towns of the Tuscans, is an undeniable proof; for certainly they could

could never be so beautiful as they are, if their territories were not fruitful, and their inhabitants industrious. The Papal state, besides the territories of Bologna and Ferrara, has many tracts very well cultivated and peopled, though it has many that are little less than desert: and as to the kingdom of Naples, some of its provinces have the reputation in Italy of being upon the whole still more fertile and more various in their productions than even Lombardy and Piedmont; and they must certainly be so; otherwise their capital town, which contains at least half the number of people in London, could certainly not subsist.

But let me not omit that narrow streak of land, which lies on the Tyrrhene sea; I mean only that tract which is partly possessed by the king of Sardinia, and partly by the Genoese. The land there can neither boast of pastures covered with fat oxen, nor of fields rich in corn and
hemp,

hemp, as Piedmont, and Lombardy. It is a rocky country, almost without timber, and not much abounding in wine : and yet the inhabitants have no reason to envy their neighbours : for, besides their lemons and oranges, which yield a pretty income, they have a tree that makes them ample amends for whatever they may want. The tree I mean, is the olive, which thrives there better perhaps than in any other part of the known world.

To give some idea of the advantage the Genoese reap by the olive-tree, I must tell my reader, that on the western extremity of their country, there is an independent principality so very small, that I have leisurely walked it backwards and forwards in a day, holding an umbrella in my hand because it was a rainy day.

This empire in miniature is little more than six miles long, and little more than half a mile broad where it is broadest. And yet there are upon it two towns

(Monaco and Mentone) which contain about five thousand inhabitants between both : a village (Roccabruna) with about four hundred souls in it ; and about six hundred inhabitants more, who live in single houses and in cottages scattered up and down the mountain that limits it on the north, as the sea does on the south. Is it not a little surprising that about six thousand people can find their sustenance in a tract of land scarcely four miles square, and at a considerable distance from all populous towns ? yet it is still more surprising, that almost the whole of their sustenance arises from their oil, which they have there in such quantity, that the thirteenth part of it, which they give in kind, and as subjects, to their sovereign, forms an income to him of about four thousand pounds sterling : so that, supposing all the owners of olive-trees there very faithful in giving the full thirteenth part of their oil to their sovereign, the oil produced by so small

small a tract of land must be worth thirteen times four thousand pound ; that is, above fifty thousand pounds sterling. Had any man so many acres of land along that coast as some dukes have in England, how much do you think he would be worth ? We are therefore not to wonder, if the Genoese, many parts of whose territory along that coast are still better than the principality of Monaco, have many rich subjects : we are not to wonder when we read in Addison, and in other travel-writers, that there are in Genoa several palaces so large and so magnificent, as to be fit for kings and emperors ; and we are not to wonder if so small a state can boast of several families, such as the Doria, Spinola, Grimaldi, and others, whose names are as well known as those of the most illustrious persons in the western world. Wherever intrinsic and real riches abound, great buildings

will be raised, and great families will be formed upon the least concurrence of industry with a favourable turn of fortune.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

I HAVE just said a word *en passant* in the preceding chapter, of the breeds of horses that are in Piedmont; and every body that has seen Turin, and the king of Sardinia's stables and studs in several parts of that province, will easily allow, that there are a good many fine horses both for the coach and saddle. The same may be said with regard to several provinces that lye along the Po, and especially that called the *Polèfine* beyond Ferrara, where they have several breeds much esteemed all over Italy.

But the kingdom of Naples is the country, which in this particular surpasses all other parts of Italy. This kingdom abounds in horses that are strong, well made, mettlesome, and withal of a high

stature and imposing air. I do not pretend to any skill on this head, and can only judge of them, either at second hand, or by the simple effect which the sight of a horse produces on a slight inspection. Judging in this manner, I say that the several sets of Neapolitan horses which I have seen in the king's stables at Versailles, are certainly not inferior to the very finest that are purchased for that monarch in the Holstein, in Denmark, and in Spain itself. I have besides seen another set at Madrid, and ordered by that king from the country where he had long reigned; and that set, when led in the sun, appeared as if they had been gilded with gold. That indeed was the very finest set of horses that I ever saw any where. I have likewise heard many travellers speak in very emphatic terms of the great numbers, as well as of the great beauty of the horses which are to be seen in Naples, and all accounts seem to agree, that that

kingdom

kingdom is one of the countries in Europe most remarkable in this particular.

And yet Mr. Sharp, who is very diffuse on the riches and conveniences of life to be remarked in that city, (which yet he has the art of metamorphosing into poverty and inconveniencies) scarcely mentions its horses; as if horses, instead of being real riches, and real conveniencies, were so very miserable an object, as not to deserve the least attention from a travel-writer. He passes over this article with only informing his correspondent, that *all job-horses you hire at Naples, are poor and starved things, of which it is even difficult to procure a pair*; and this may be very true for aught I know; though it is still credible, that with money many a pair may very well be procured.

He cannot have acted quite fairly neither, when he assures us, that the Italian horses and the Italian postillions are so very bad, that *one may give what scope he*

pleases to his fancy, and yet will never imagine half their disagreeableness. I do not know in what the agreeableness of post-horses and postillions consists, according to Mr. Sharp's notions; but I know, that this way of telling things, as I have already observed, betrays more moroseness and ill-will, than judgment and love of truth; and is indeed perfectly ridiculous, if it be true that the *outré* is always ridiculous. The fact is, that the post-horses are in general very good all over Italy, and that our postillions generally drive at a great rate, trotting their horses on any ascent and descent that will possibly permit it, and galloping on flat ground rather in a desperado-way than otherwise: and that this is a fact, I appeal to any English gentleman who has rid post through Italy, and not gone hundreds and hundreds of miles with the same cattle, as Mr. Sharp has done to my certain knowledge.

However

However the number of horses is not proportionably so large in Italy as in England, especially that of saddle-horses; and this because the Italians travel little through their country, as I said, especially on horseback; because they have no horse-races (except those inconsiderable ones that I have mentioned); because they have no stage-coaches nor waggons crossing the country on all parts; and because they do not make so general a use of horses in the business of agriculture; but plough their lands with oxen, at least in all the parts of Italy that I have seen.

As for the carrying of burthens, we make use of mules, and of another animal called *Gimerro* *, especially throughout the mountains where horses would soon perish.

* *Gimerro* in English is *Jumart*, from the French. See Johnson's dictionary.

Of mules we have great droves continually carrying merchandises, particularly over those parts of the Apennine that answer to the port of Leghorn; those of the Alps that lye between Italy and Savoy, Switzerland, and Tirol; and those which geographers call the Ligurian Alps. Some of the muletteers of the Apennine draw even carts with mules; but those of the Alps never do, or at least I never saw any that did. Perhaps the greater hight of the Alps and their unconquerable ruggedness causes the want of this convenience.

It will not be improper to say something of the gimerro's, as I find that no travel-writer, of the many I have read, has ever mentioned them, and that they are but little known even to those of my English friends who delight in various and extensive reading. A gimerro is an animal born of a horse and a cow; or of a bull and a mare; or of an ass and a
cow.

cow. The two first sorts are generally as large as the largest mules, and the third somewhat smaller. I have been told by some muletteers in several parts. that the fires of these animals are first shown a female of their species just before the leap; then led forcibly to one of the species intended, which is kept at hand. The alpine peasants assure us, that they might get a fourth kind between a bull and a female ass, but that they ordinarily prove sorry things. Of the two first sorts I have seen hundreds, especially at Demont, a fortress in the Alps (about ten miles above the town of Cuneo) that was much talked of during the last war between the French and the Piedmontese. There many of these gimmerro's were used, chiefly in carrying stones and sand up to the fortress that was then a building on a high rocky hill. Of the third species I rode upon one from Savona * to Acqui, so late as the year

* Savona is a town on the Ligurian coast, belonging to the Genoese, and Acqui is the capital of
Upper

1765. It was a sluggish beast, scarcely sensible of the bit and whip; but wonderfully sure-footed: and riding that way in January, as I did, in a most rugged by-road; the whole country round covered with a deep snow; many a mile in a narrow path, often on the brink of a precipice, and all the north sides of the frequent cliffs, (over which I was to go) perfectly hidden under the hardest ice; going such a way, I say, I had really need of such a beast, that was very careful not to fall.

The gimerro's resemble the mules so much, that, if you are not told, you will scarcely ever think of the difference, which chiefly consists in the ears, not so long as those of the mules; in the parts of the head about the nostrils and mouth, which in the gimerro's are generally rounder

Upper Monferrat, belonging to the king of Sardinia.

than

than in the mules ; and in the middle of the back which is sharper in the mules than in the gimerro's. Those between a bull and a mare have likewise a fiercer aspect than the other two species's ; and the species of that on which I went that journey, have their upper fore-teeth remarkably more forward than their under ; and yet they feed very well. A careful examiner, I believe, would discover more distinguishing characteristics of the gimerro's than I did. My eyes, which are none of the best, and consequently not much used to survey objects with great exactness, did not help me to more. The mules are rather perverse in their nature than otherwise ; and the gimerro's of the largest sizes are still worse. But since it comes in my way, I will say that the perversity of the mules has been exaggerated beyond measure by Dr. Smollet in his account of Italy ; and it is not true, that they will bite and kick the horses they meet on the road.

road. I never perceived any particular antipathy of this kind in these useful beasts. It is indeed not safe to stand behind a mule when unloaded; but as to biting on the road or out of the road, horses or any other creatures, I will say it to their honour, is not a part of their nature. The doctor has taken this fact upon trust, or has dreamed it, as he has done several other throughout his book, of which I have not taken notice in any of the foregoing chapters, not only because it would have led me too far to confute them all, but also because there is a certain liveliness and assurance in his style and manner, that diverted me even when he was wrong.

But since I have happened to mention the quadrupeds of Italy, and offered even an apology for our mules, I may as well give a good word to our asses.

The nature of our country requires many mules, which cannot prove good, except

except their fires are also good. We therefore take great care to have good asses. The very best in Italy; that is, the tallest and strongest, are those of the Marca: and this province by the bye, is so famous for the number and goodness of its asses, that in our language the word *marchigiano* (inhabitant or native of the Marca) is no very honourable appellation, and too much in the Billingsgate-style. One of the best asses and fit for breeding, is sometimes purchased in the Marca at a very high price; and I have heard of some which have been sold for fifty pounds sterling, and even more.

Of the minor domestic quadrupeds of Italy, there is no need of speaking, as I know of none there, but what are common in England, except I was to say, that we are far from having so many sheep and rabbits as the English, though we have a good many. We have also comparatively very few deer; but there are

many stags that run wild, besides a few that are kept in enclosures. We have a number of wild-boars, some bears, and some *camozzi* and *caprioli*, which are two species of wild goats; and a great many wolves in our mountains and woods. So that, considering the great plenty and variety of fruit and grain, as well as the variety and numbers of quadrupeds there, Petrarch was in the right when he called Italy

Terra di biade e d' animai ferace.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXIX.

WHAT I have here said concerning the public and domestic exercises practised in different parts of Italy, will, I believe be thought sufficient to show, that if the Italians do not make it a point of public policy (as the ancient Romans did) to be nationally vigorous, yet they are not such puny mortals as foreign travellers and poets usually paint them, and that indolence and effeminacy are not more diffused amongst them than amongst any other of the European nation.

Let me now be indulged in a few more cursory observations on other such parts of their peculiar characteristics as will come in my way without any great effort in searching for them; as also, on some additional strictures on a few more passages in Mr. Sharp's Letters.

The politeness of the Italians to strangers has been allowed by almost all travel-writers of all nations: and Mr. Sharp himself, though always unwilling to grant them any good quality, has been candid enough in this particular when he considered their politeness as exerted in favour of his countrymen.

But Mr. Sharp is undoubtedly mistaken when he intimates that the Italians have an antipathy to the French, and when he adds that this antipathy has its source in their *frequent and wanton invasions of Italy*.

Besides that the word *wanton* is ridiculously employed in his remark, as no nation is invaded merely through wantonness by another, there are few states in Italy that have suffered much by what Mr. Sharp terms *invasions*: nay some of those very states, where French armies have appeared in the two last wars, were in my opinion rather benefited than hurt by their appearance.

However,

However, be this as it will the Italians have had no great cause to complain of the French for several years ; and as none of our governments suffer virulent scribblers to inflame us with a hateful aversion to this or that race of outlandish mortals, our general sentiments with regard to the French, are just such as those we entertain with regard to all other nations upon earth ; so that a Frenchman travelling through Italy is full as much caressed and respected as an Englishman or any other European.

Nor is the politeness we practise towards strangers ever allayed by the gross pride, so common in some countries, where if a foreigner meets with some civility from the natives, he is sure likewise of being insulted with ill-timed and partial boasts of superiurity. I think I have observed too much of this in Spain, and still more in France. But our delicacy on this head is so great, that we consider it as a breach

of good manners to speak with any warmth in praise of our country in the presence of a stranger. An Italian will shew him his house, his pictures, his villa, or any thing he possesses, without ever putting to him the coarse question, whether he has ever seen any thing finer. He will make him take notice of a beauty of art or nature, because he thinks it worth notice; but he never forgets that comparisons are odious: and I remember a lady of Venice, who severely rebuked her forward son for having asked me whether in my country there was any square so fine as that of St. Mark, and obliged him to ask my pardon for his incivility. And yet most Italians are strongly prepossessed in favour of their country; which prepossession they must naturally retain as long as they see a number of strangers successively visiting their provinces.

I have already observed that the Italians are much attached to their native places.

A singular

A singular proof of this attachment is observable in almost all Italian books; as our authors seldom forget to specify in the title-page the particular spot where they are born, be it ever so inglorious a town or obscure a village.

Mr. Sharp, humbly mimicking Mr. Addison, has been so sagacious as to discover, that the Neapolitans are much addicted to litigiousness. He speaks with great emphasis of the streets of Naples so crowded with advocates, as to obstruct his passage to their chief court of judicature. *What a blessed country,* he exclaims after his exaggerated account, *where all who are not princes or beggars, are lawyers or priests!*

But all remarks of this nature, begging Mr. Sharp's pardon, betray more levity and malice than their authors are aware of. The Italians in general are not better pleased with a tedious attendance in a court of judicature, or in the outer room of a

lawyer, than the English or any other people. Yet in large cities, where both the power and the commerce of a kingdom are centered; where the most important affairs of a nation must finally be determined; and where different interests are variously interwoven, how is it possible to avoid a great deal of litigation? Monsieur Voltaire, or Monsieur L'Abbé Le Blanc (I do not remember which) has, very ridiculously in my opinion, made a criticism of this nature upon the English; and I remember to have read somewhere in an English book or news-paper some panegyrical pages on the king of Prussia for having issued a code, in which among other regulations concerning the dispatch of justice, there is one by which the Prussian judges are enjoined to terminate any cause whatsoever within the space of a twelvemonth. But what may possibly be done in such a military and uncommercial state as that of Prussia, begging again Mr.

Sharp's

Sharp's pardon, cannot be done either in London or in Naples, for reasons that would be very obvious to him, if he had ever given much attention to the affairs of men, and examined with a sagacious eye the multifarious transactions of the several courts at Westminster, as well as in the inferiour tribunals of this great metropolis. And his ill-natured exclamation in derision of the Neapolitans would certainly have been spared, if he had been able to comprehend, that a metropolis merely inhabited by princes, beggars, lawyers, and priests, cannot possibly exist but in a disordered imagination.

I have no where in the preceding chapter taken any notice of our customs with regard to marriages and funerals, because on these two particulars I never remarked any very material difference between our customs and those of the English. People marry in Italy after the publication of three bans as they do in England; and

a dispensation of bans is easily procured there as well as here by those who do not chuse to marry in a church. Great dinners and great suppers are customary in both countries upon such occasions: I mean amongst the midling and lower sort of people, who adhere longest to old customs, and whose usages form the principal part of the national manners. Congratulations of the same kind are usual on the same occasions: and with respect to funerals, little more is to be said, but that the people in Italy are commonly buried in their parish-church or church-yard, as has been said over and over by travel-writers; and few corpses are sent to distant places to be buried in family-vaults, as the custom is in England, because the Italians live in towns and not in country-seats, as many of the English nobility and gentry do, or are reputed to do.

The only remarkable difference between the two nations with respect to funerals is, that a corpse in Italy is commonly escorted
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to the burial-place by a large procession of priests, friars, and orphans of both sexes maintained in hospitals, all with lighted tapers in their hands, and all singing penitential psalms, litanies, and other compositions, which we think well adapted to the occasion. And such processions are longer or shorter; that is, more or less expensive, as has been ordered either by the testator, or by those, whose duty or business is to take care of the funeral.

But a corpse in all parts of Italy is always carried to the burial-place uncovered; and *this fashion* (says Mr. Sharp with his usual peremptoriness) *this fashion I must condemn; for the aspect of death* (does he add with his usual wisdom) *should never be suffered to become too familiar to the common people with so much brimstone in their veins, as the Neapolitan mob have.*

I do not know by what sort of anatomical experiment Mr. Sharp has been able to discover, that the Neapolitan mob have
brimstone

brimstone in their veins. But as to his peremptoriness and wisdom, I fear they are quite as improper in this place, as what he immediately subjoins, that *if a dead or a dying man was a frightful object, a murderer would feel remorse in the very act of homicide, or the moment after; but there are ways to render men capable of butchering a man and a hog with the same sang froid.*

If I do not misunderstand this obscure passage, Mr. Sharp means, that the fashion of carrying the dead uncovered to the burial-place, contributes to render men murderers, because it hardens their hearts to such a degree, as to bring them to kill a man and a hog with equal indifference. But if this is Mr. Sharp's meaning, (and I do not know what other construction can be put upon his words) I must take the liberty to tell him, that he knows but little of the general effect that the sight of a dead person must produce
in

in the heart of a beholder, especially when that dead person is carried to the burial-place with the solemnity of a sad apparatus, and mournful praying and singing, as the Italians use to do. Far from having any immoral tendency, it will easily be conceived by my reader, that such a sight must rather serve to awaken in every mind a train of reflections, no less melancholly than useful, on the vanity of life and its most courted felicities. I can very well conceive, that there are means of bringing a beginner in anatomy to familiarise himself so much with dead bodies, as to cut up the corpse of a man with as much sang froid as the carcase of any animal; and yet I do not necessarily suppose a surgeon to be of course destitute of humanity: but I cannot possibly comprehend how the mournful sight of a man, woman, or child, decently laid down on a bier, and seen for a short space at the end of a funeral proceffion, can give such a cruel disposition to any mind, as to ren-

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der,

der, or contribute to render, any man a murderer. But Mr. Sharp had asserted that the Italians have a natural propensity to murder and assassination, and did not care what arguments he used and what evidence he produced to prove that assertion.

Whenever any singular piece of antiquity is discovered in those parts of Italy where such sort of things are more frequently found than in other places, all kinds of people eagerly run to look at it; and those amongst the learned of England who delight in the study of ancient monuments, are very well apprised, that no learned men of any nation have given so many accounts of such remains as the Italians. The apartments and gardens of persons of rank at Rome, Naples, and other places, abound with such remains; nay, the very walls of many of their houses are artfully incrustated with them; and rather too many of our learned turn
their

their minds to the explanation of these monuments.

Yet Mr. Sharp overlooks all this most cavalierly, and rallies and ridicules the Italians for the *little veneration they shew to such curiosities*; and is of opinion, that any English gentleman with five thousand a year, would mortgage a part of it to preserve a temple of Serapis in its exact form, with all the ornaments, paintings, &c.

But does Mr. Sharp give here a just idea of the Italians, or does he pay a compliment, at their expence, to his own countrymen? *The king, he adds, or rather the regency of Naples, lay violent hands, as he wittily phrases it, on the statues and pictures as they occur in digging, and transport them to some of the royal palaces where they lose half their merit.* But how can it be made out, that they lose half their merit by being collected and arranged in large rooms and galleries destined to this purpose? Would it not rather be most
absurd

absurd to let them continue in damp and dirty subterraneous places, where the greatest part of them could not be inspected but with infinite inconvenience, and by the light of candles and torches? I have no objection to Mr. Sharp for his having a very good opinion of those among his countrymen who are possessed of five thousand a year: but a man must be strangely inclined to chicanery, who can ridicule the Italians, when he sees them assiduously employed in preserving all monuments that can possibly be preserved. If all the attention, which the ideas of speculatists on such subjects might require, be not paid to every monument of antiquity, neither is it of mighty consequence. These things depend on the taste and disposition of princes and rich noblemen, who are capricious, sometimes undervaluing, sometimes overvaluing such curiosities.

Most travellers, as they arrive at Rome or Naples, can scarcely abstain from reflecting

flecting upon their inhabitants, because, instead of possessing the identical buildings of the ancient emperors and consuls, they scarcely own a few of their ruins. One ridicules them for having nothing but poor villas or cots on those very spots, that were formerly dignified by temples dedicated to Jupiter and Mercury; the other is angry, because the Italians cross now on a vile ferry those rivers, that were formerly half hidden under magnificent bridges: and after many erudite and doleful commemorations of this kind, they join in chorus to abuse the governments of both states, which discourage population by letting monks and nuns tread the ground that was once trod by Cæsars; the glorious ground on which the Romans used to swarm like bees in a hive, and where some of them had habitations large enough to receive hundreds of guests upon occasion.

But do these wise travellers expect that Italy, confined to its own products and its

own

own industry, should vie with that magnificence which it received from the spoils of a conquered world? Perhaps Italy, on the whole, may not fall very short of its ancient population. This is not a place for such discussions: but if Italy does not now make other nations so miserable, as formerly, by the effects of a successful ambition, its inhabitants are not in themselves the less happy, or a less valuable part of the society of mankind.

Mr. Sharp indeed has not often copied the learned tone of lamentation used by many other travellers with regard to the ancient state of Rome and Naples: but with regard to their present condition and government, he has really surpassed by much all his rambling predecessors in point of vilifying remarks. I give him due praise upon the first account; because really the ravages of time can no more be helped by the modern Romans or Neapolitans, than the revolutions of the moon.

But

But as to the second part of the story, without entering into a discussion that would require a large volume, I may seriously assure him, that I know still shallower statesmen than he is, who not only can find fault with any government in the world, but even form with the greatest easiness such plans of reformation for any country, as would, (if well attended to) bestow upon any nation every species of blessing that can possibly be fancied by the most brilliant imagination.

Mr. Sharp has seen in Venice many (or, as he says, an *infinity of*) *small lyon's heads about the Doge's palace, large enough to receive into their mouths (from informers) a letter or billet, with labels over, pointing out what the nature of the information should be.* Hence he has directly concluded, that the Venetian government *continues to encourage private informations.*

But this is a misrepresentation of facts; for this method of informing is no longer

practised there, whatever may have been the custom in former times. Those heads have been long full of cobwebs and choaked with dust, as Mr. Sharp might have seen if he had looked into them. It is even probable that they were originally placed there *in terrorem*, rather with a view to prevent crimes than multiply informers. A regulation perhaps not imprudent before the government was so seated and the police so regulated as it is at present, because Venice is a large and open town, which cannot conveniently be guarded by soldiers or watchmen.

Mr. Sharp speaks likewise at random when he says, that the Doge of Venice, *as soon as elected, is to avoid all show of equality and familiarity, and to seclude himself in a manner from the sweets of society.* How came Mr. Sharp to know so much about the Pope at Rome, and the Doge at Venice? If you will take his word, he is as much apprised of the thoughts of one, and the domestic life

life of the other as of his own: Yet the fact is, that a Doge must certainly pay great respect to his new dignity, and not prostitute it to an affectation of equality and familiarity: but, if he is of a sociable good-natured temper, he may freely continue to live in his private capacity as he did before; go about masked in carnival or ascension-time, either alone or in company as he pleases, and pass the evening at his casino with his friends. He will be better liked for such a conduct, and avoid the blame of pride, as was the case with Doge Foscarini, who died when I was last at Venice. When in the exercise of his office, you had taken him for a very haughty man: but out of it, he was even a more cheerful and pleasing companion than before his being Doge.

Mr. Sharp says, that it is *not only Padua, but every other town in the territory of the republic, that appears poor in comparison of the mother city.* An acute remark indeed!

But is this not the case in England, France, Turkey and every where? However, I suppose, Mr. Sharp cannot have any great difficulty to grant, that amongst the daughter-towns in his own country, there are not easily to be found four so full of fine buildings and so populous, as Vicenza, Verona, Brescia, and Bergamo.

Mr. Sharp is not pleased with the Farnesian Hercules, *because*, says he, *there is no such original in nature, as he happens to know from his particular studies, that the muscles of a man's body, however much inflated, would never assume the shape they do in that statue.* I know indeed but little of Anatomy, and am really a very indifferent connoisseur: yet, as I have always heard people reckon the Farnesian Hercules a most admirable model of a man when supposed to partake of something divine, as was the case with that demigod; and as the Venus de Medici's has been for a good number of centuries looked upon as one
of

of the most astonishing models of female beauty that was ever formed by a chissel, I must continue to think that Glycon and Cleomenes were good statuaries, and that Mr. Sharp and Dr. Smollet* are no competent judges of human form; be their skill in anatomy ever so wonderful, and their compass of connoisseurship ever so extensive.

Mr. Sharp says, that the monks at Naples exhibit plays in their convents during the carnival; and this I know to be customary. But I know that it is not customary for them, as he says, *to appear in very lascivious characters*. The assertion favours much of malignity and calumny; and I wish he had forbore it, or given such proofs of it as to render it unquestionable. Our monks are not yet gone so far in imprudence, as to be indecent in the eyes of the public: and should they ever for-

* Dr. Smollet has found fault with the Venus de Medici.

get themselves so far as to represent any thing lascivious, both the ecclesiastical and civil government would certainly not fail to make them immediately sensible of so gross an error.

But I am tired of running over the blunders, the caricatures, and, above all, the gigantic exaggerations of this gentleman, who could find an English gardener in Italy *under a state of despair because there he could not taste a peach of a true flavour.*

CHAP. XL. AND LAST.

ITALY affords so many objects worth observation and description, that a work of the nature of mine might easily be made very voluminous. Yet to write in a foreign language, to which during these last six years I have been but little accustomed, has proved so difficult, that I think it is time to take leave of my readers, after offering a few hints to those who intend to travel through Italy, which probably may not be unuseful.

I believe it is not necessary to say, that a disposition to spend money freely, is one of the chief requisites towards the pleasure of such an undertaking. However there are few English travellers who need this advice; and perhaps it would not be improper to warn some of the most profuse, of the general character this quality has ac-

quired them in Italy, where they are often called dupes and fools; and many of my countrymen have wished for a law to prevent their coming into Italy, unless they come with a certificate, importing that they know the true use of money: for it is certain that their prodigality has a very bad effect; rendering our inn-keepers, postillions, and other persons of that sort, so greedy after money, that they are continually rising in their demands; and those who successively make the same tour, find the expences of travelling always encreasing. I think it was acutely imagined by Mr. Sharp, that *the Pope is sometimes pleased to speak of the English with a kind of gratitude for the sums of money they spend amongst his subjects*. Whoever knows what a pitiful gentleman the Pope is, and what need he has of a few English guineas to keep his poor family from starving, will readily mistake for realities the strange dreams of Mr. Sharp. However I will assure him, when

when he is awake, that no sensible person in Rome or out of Rome, is of his Holiness's mind in this particular, if his Holiness is of this mind: that no Italian gentleman, one small degree above our friend Antonio, never troubles his head about the coming or not coming of English gentlemen in the country; and that we all despise foreigners, when we see them squandering their money in an improper manner,

A traveller ought to have his post-chaise not only strongly built to resist the many stony roads in Italy, but likewise have it so contrived, as to be easily taken to pieces where it must inevitably be disjoined in order to pass a mountain or to be put into a * felucca; that is, in going over mount Cenis, or from some port of southern France to Genoa.

* A felucca is a small bark about the size of a common barge, much used along the Ligurian coast.

And

And *à propos* of mount Cenis, let no one be frightened by the dismal accounts, so frequent in the books of travel-writers, of the bad road over dangerous precipices through Savoy or the Apennines. Those dangerous precipices exist no where, but in the imagination of the timorous; for wherever there is any dubious pass, the Italian postilions have common sense enough not to venture their necks along with those of their passengers, but they desire them to alight and assist in conquering the difficulty, if there are no people of the country at hand: and even this happens but very seldom, because the podesta's and head-men of towns and villages take sufficient care of the roads every where, or at least have any dangerous pass mended as soon as they are apprised of it by the post-masters, who would loudly complain to their common superiors, if their informations of this nature were overlooked.

Nor would I have Mr. Sharpe's advice followed; that of hiring voiturins through Savoy, on pretence that whether you ride post or not, you still advance at the same slow rate. You may ride post through the greatest part of Savoy with the same expedition as any where else; and the only advantage to be had by crossing it with a voiturin (that is, with the same set of horses) is, that of passing two or three nights more than you would otherwise in poor inns, as you cannot reach distant towns every night.

But I had almost forgot to say, that along with money and some knowledge of its use, you must indispensably carry along with you a chearful and friendly disposition of mind.

It is not easy to conceive why travellers are so ready to entertain digusts against the inhabitants of the countries they visit. They seem to have no other purpose by taking long journeys but to procure themselves
the

the base pleasure of railing at every thing they have seen and heard. It is to this malignant disposition, that we owe the many ridiculous and unjust accusations, which travellers bring against the countries they have but cursorily visited. Christians against Christians are particularly severe, and hate each other very often upon the most slender motives. I once heard a Frenchman swear that he hated the English, *parce qu'ils versent du beurre fondu sur leur veau rôti*. And yet, neither Protestants nor Catholics are angry with the Turks or the East-Indians for their peculiar practices; but relate them in their travels without the least particle of that indignation that fires them when they speak of each other. Why do they not adopt the same moderation when they give accounts of each other's country? Strange, that they will suffer themselves to be thrown into fits of the spleen when they see a man strutting along a street with his hat under

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his

his arm, or two stout fellows boxing, or a proceſſion, or any other thing not cuſtomary in their own countries. Their moſt peeviſh ſarcaſms will certainly mend no body, nor will they themſelves be a bit the better for their want of temper. A judicious man travels in order to profit himſelf by obſerving the varieties that this wide world affords, and not to make himſelf uneaſy becauſe men are not to be found wiſe according to his model in every part of the globe. The variety of the world, is, on the whole, beautiful; and to a well diſpoſed mind will be pleaſing.

On your reaching the firſt town in Italy, whether it be Turin, Genoa, or any other, endeavour to obtain as many letters of recommendation from the natives as you can, to take along with you as you advance further into the country. The nobility of every place; and, above all, the learned, will be pleaſed to give you ſuch letters; and the people to whom you will be thus recommended,

recommended, will still direct you to others: so that, on your alighting in any town, you will presently have some body to talk to; and they all will be glad (either through vanity or natural benevolence, no matter which) of an opportunity of doing you some of those petty offices that render travelling agreeable; such as to procure you a good lodging where the inn is not to your liking; to furnish you with a faithful servant when you want one; to tell you the true price of things that you may not be cheated; and what is better than all, to introduce you into the best companies of the place. Indeed you may often find, that the gentlemen and ladies to whom you are recommended, are not always such as you would like. You will find one over-civil, and another over-blunt: one absurd in one point, and another in two or or three. But people must be taken as they are, as perfect characters are pretty uncommon every where: therefore

fore make the best use of each. One will show you the place; one his pictures; one his medals; one the country round; and so on. And do not omit, if you make the least stay in any town, to enquire who are the friars of most repute there, and go to them. To a friar there is no need of any introducer. It is enough you pay them the usual compliment, that you have heard of his merit, and would not miss the opportunity of paying your respects to his reverence. They all will receive you well; show you their convents, their libraries, their gardens, and whatever curiosities they have. They will inform you very minutely of their rules and manner of living, which is pretty singular in each order, and deserving notice. Most of them are quite open with strangers; so that you will easily collect by their discourse what is their sanctity or their hypocrisy, what their knowledge or their ignorance, what their pleasures or their pains.

I have

I have brought many an Englishman acquainted with many a friar, and both parties were always pleased. Nor judge of them by the faces they put on at the altar or in a procession; or ten to one you will judge wrong. See them in their cells; walk with them; eat and drink with those who are permitted by their institutions to eat and drink with strangers; and you will thus come to the knowledge of as singular a set of men as ever attracted philosophical curiosity. A traveller ought to shun nothing, to slight nothing. If he is in any danger from general intercourse, he is not fit to travel.

Some travel-writers will tell you, that bread and wine are bad throughout Italy, particularly the wine. Do not believe them. The poor in several parts of Italy often eat bread that is but indifferent; but people in easy circumstances eat good bread every where. At the very worst, even in the poorest villages you will find
bakers

bakers who will make bread for you after your fancy at a short warning for the smallest addition to the common price. And as to the wine, you will find some very good in many parts of Italy, if you are not absolutely resolved to think no wine good but claret and burgundy. And still, if you cannot conquer a long habit, you will find burgundy and champaigne in all our great towns; and it is but taking half a dozen bottles in your post-chaise when you are to go from one great town to another, and cannot perform the journey but in two or three days. And so when you are afraid of not finding good victuals in the poor places where you must necessarily stop, a ham, a sausage, and some chickens, made ready for the pot or the spit, and some other little expedients cannot prove very troublesome.

The beds indeed you will find bad enough in many places; and you must have a care never to sleep but in your own sheets,

because the inn-keepers, when they are poor, are generally ill-provided, and are even rogues into the bargain, that will swear no body has slept in the sheets they offer, though the contrary is very apparent; nor will it be amiss to have a thin mattress of your own, stuffed with feathers or Spanish wool, to throw over the mattresses of the inn: for you are not to think that you travel about England where thousands are continually going backwards and forwards, and of course make it worth the while of many to keep good inns.

At the gates of many towns your baggage will be visited. Be ready with the keys of the trunks; be civil to the visiters, and they will be civil to you, and dispatch you in a moment, especially if your servant knows the use of a glance and of a fixpence.

Some young travellers are apt to be rude with the maids at the inns. They had better to make a proposal in two words,
and

and still better to let it alone; for little good will they get by rudeness or proposals. If the nymph be willing, there may be a danger of one sort; if unwilling, of another. Our common people are generally fierce when women are concerned. And have likewise a care not to be very busy with our theatrical queens and princesses; for they will fleece you, and bring you much acquainted with surgeons and apothecaries.

Avoid all altercations with inn-keepers, postillions, and other such folks, and never forget yourself so much as to strike or even threaten them; for most of these people are very choleric; besides there is no honour to be got in conquering them. No body is pleased with travelling Rodomonts any where; and you cannot imagine how the low people in Italy hate being bullied, especially by strangers. An open countenance, an affable look, a kind enquiry

after their christian names; and the offer of a glass of your wine if you are actually at your meal, will do wonders towards obtaining whatever you desire of them: for the Italians, take my word for it, have in general a quick feeling, are of a yielding disposition, and as generous a set of mortals as any in the world. If you do not observe some rule of this kind, travelling will not be better than a scene of wrangling and vexation in most countries.

Credit your travel-mongers about the character of the Italians, and your imagination will be disturbed by the most horrible tales. There is scarcely one of them, but who has a story to tell of a fellow in a church, who has stabbed divers persons. Yet all Italy over, in towns or in villages, on great roads or narrow paths, you may be assured that no body will offend you, if you do not chuse to be offended: but on the contrary you will meet with abundance

dance of respect and kindness, if you will but moderately deserve it.

All this, as you see, presupposes in you some knowledge of the language; and I take it for granted, that you do not venture down the Alps without some Italian in your mouth, as travelling through any country without some of its language is very disagreeable and very vexatious. However, if this is not the case, hasten to Florence or to Siena (though Florence is the best in this respect) and there study as hard as you can, till you get a sufficient provision of words and phrases. If you want to be any thing of a critic in Italian, Florence is certainly the best place in Italy, both to get a good phraseology and a good pronunciation, as Florence is in both respects to Italy what Athens was to Greece. But if you want only a smattering for temporary convenience, I have no objection to your going to Rome, as
you

you are directed by an Italian * rhyme no less common than ridiculous. The Roman pronunciation is much more easily acquired than the Florentine, because at Rome the vowels are pronounced broader and with less briskness than at Florence. Almost all Italians that are not Tuscans (I speak to him who wants to be a critic in Italian) will be ready to tell you that the Tuscan pronunciation, and the Florentine especially, is bad, because it is guttural; and that it is guttural I allow; but why is a guttural pronunciation worse than one which is not? The Hebrew, the Arabic, and several more of the most esteemed amongst the ancient languages, were guttural, and not the worse for it. The true Spanish, that is the Castilian, which is generally considered as a very harmonious language, and in my private opinion quite as musical as the Italian, is guttural likewise. What objection can

* *Lingua Toscana in bocca Romana.*

then

then be made to a language on this account, except that it is a little hard to be got at by those who have not the organs of speech very pliant and obedient? However, such as are not of my mind, may do as the rhyme directs; that is, they may go to Florence or Siena to learn words and phrases, and then to Rome for a proper pronunciation; and a pretty piece of work this will be.

No English traveller that ever I heard, ever went a step out of those roads, which from the foot of the Alps lead straight to our most famed cities. None of them ever will deign to visit those places whose names are not in every body's mouth. They travel to see things, and not men. Indeed they cannot help crossing both the Alps and Apennines in two or three parts; but always do it in such haste, that their inhabitants are as much known to them as those of the Arimasbian cliffs. Our mountaineers, secluded in a manner from the

rest of the world, never awake their curiosity. I have heard of a small nation to the north of Vicenza, whose language, laws, and manners have nothing in common either with modern Italy or with modern Germany; and they are thought to be the descendants of those Cimbri, whom Marius defeated in the neighbourhood of that town. It has been confidently asserted, that the present king of Spain had been some years king of Naples before he heard of a small Greek republic concealed in a mountain of that kingdom. Many amongst our rumagers of libraries have occasionally quoted passages out of poems and romances written in the old Provençal language, which was once the only polite language of Europe. It is the general opinion that this language is no more spoken, as the modern inhabitants of Provence understand no more those romances and poems. Yet I have some notion that it still exists, at least in a good measure,

as I have met with people at Demont * who could easily understand those passages. It is probable that several other of the most remote parts in our mountains are not wanting in objects as singular as these, and well deserving some inquiry. Yet they remain perfectly unexplored by those very Britons, who make it a point to spend a part of their income and consecrate a part of their life to the visitation of distant regions and to the knowledge of foreign customs and manners. Their poor curiosity will scarcely extend farther than pictures and statues, or carnival festivities and holy-week ceremonies ; nor could any of them ever be forced half a mile out of the most beaten tracks by my frequent expostulations. What a pity

* A fortress (as I said in another place) about ten miles distant from Cuneo, and higher up in the Piedmontese Alps I lived there for some months when I was about twenty.

that so many young gentlemen of good parts, and never cramped for want of money, should all be so perverse on this particular !

F I N I S.



